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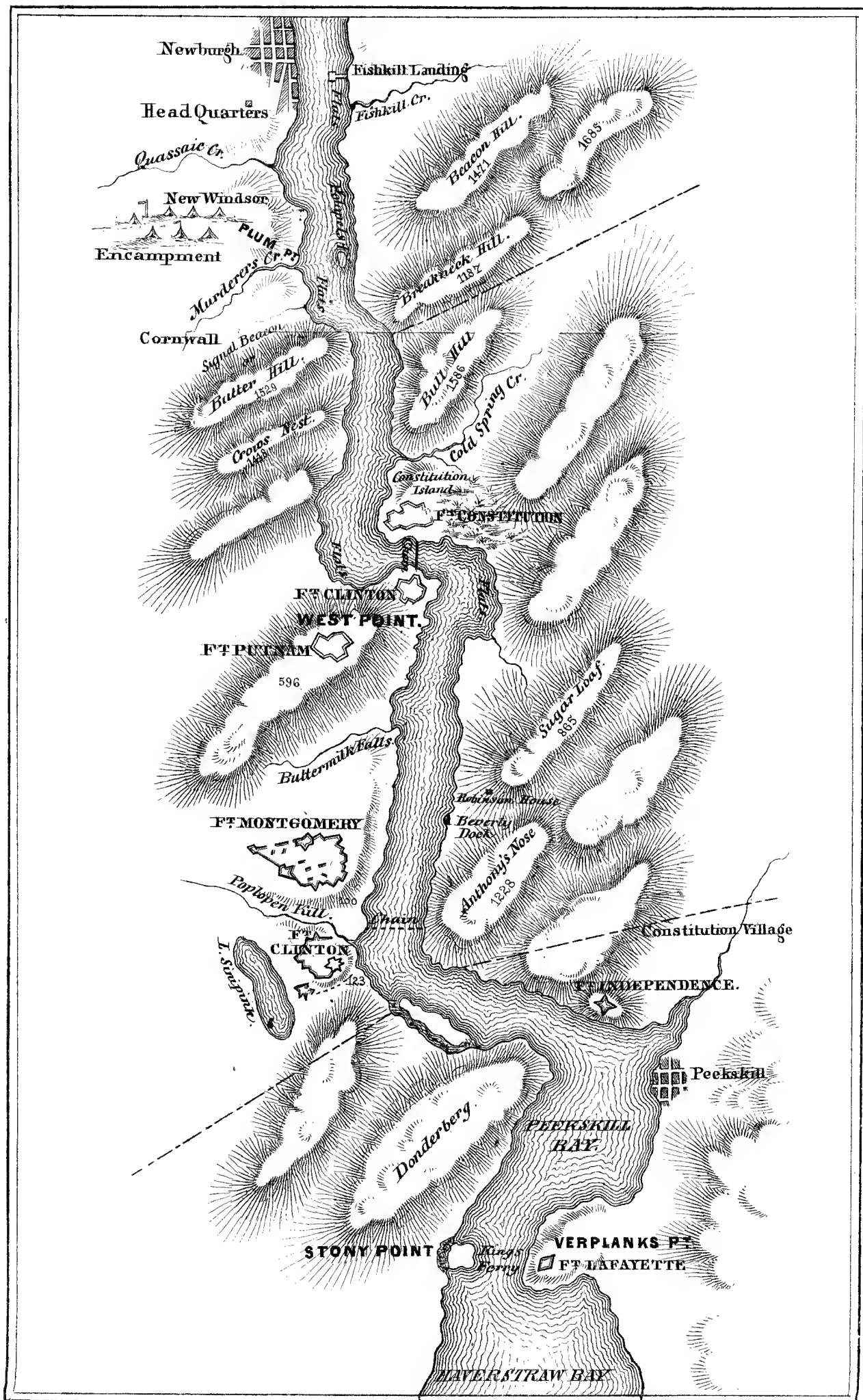
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OBSTRUCTIONS
TO THE
NAVIGATION
OF
HUDSON'S RIVER,
1776 TO 1783.

Munsell's
Historical Series.
No. V.



O B S T R U C T I O N S

TO THE

N A V I G A T I O N

OF

HUDSON'S RIVER;

EMBRACING

The MINUTES of the **Secret Committee**
Appointed by the Provincial Conven-
tion of New York, July 16, 1776,

AND OTHER

Original Documents Relating to the Subject.

TOGETHER WITH

PAPERS RELATING TO THE BEACONS.

BY E. M. RUTTENBER.

ALBANY, N. Y.:

J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.

MDCCCLX.





TO

Samuel Holden Parsons, Esq.,

OF MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

SIR :



FROM among the Documentary Memorials, relating to the Occupation and Defence of the Highlands of the Hudson during the Revolutionary War, there could scarcely be selected any, of a more interesting Class, than those that afford Details of the Plans to prevent the Passage of the armed Ships of the Enemy, by obstructing the Channel of the River. So long as an uninterrupted Communication could be maintained, between New England and the States South and West of the Hudson, there was Opportunity for Coöperation, and a Hope of

efficient Results from Unity of Action. If this Communication could by any Means be cut off, the Enemy might reasonably hope to Conquer the revolting Colonies in Detail. The Prominence given to the Subject, both in the Continental and the Provincial Congresses, and the various Measures adopted with a View towards securing this important Pass, are historically Interesting, as throwing new Light upon the Condition of Strategick Science and Military Skill, in the early Infancy of the Republick. Whilst, from the Study of the Details, we derive additional Information respecting the Opinions of the Publick Men of the Day, the Spirit of the People, and the Resources of the Country. The Documents here first collected, may, for these Reasons, justly claim a Place among the treasured Mementos of the Heroick Age of our Annals.

With the Times and Events chronicled in these Pages, your distinguished Grand-Father, Brigadier General SAMUEL H.

PARSONS, was intimately and prominently connected. He was the Commanding Officer at West Point, when the Chief and best-known Obstruction to the Passage of the Enemy's Vessels (the West-Point Chain), was in the Progress of Construction. And thus, himself a Portion of the Events, it seems only fitting that his Name should be closely associated with the Work that commemorates them.

By inscribing this Volume to you, Sir, his worthy Namesake and Descendant, the Publisher would express his Respect for the Memory of the One, and his Esteem for the Character of the Other.





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INTRODUCTION.

THE Student of American History is familiar with the Fact, that to obtain Control of the Navigation of Hudson's River, was a favourite Project with the British Ministry, during the whole Progress of the War of Independence.

In order to a proper Understanding of the Reasons on which this Project was based, we should examine with some Attention the Topography of the River—not simply as limited to the Section of Country through which its Waters flow, but taking a broader View, and regarding its Connection with those more remote and wide-spread Regions, that find through it their most direct and natural Channel to the Seaboard.

Even at the present Day, when the skilled Enterprise of a numerous and commercial People has linked the Interior to the Coast, by many and various artificial Channels, the great Thoroughfare of the State of New York holds a præeminent Position—mainly due to its unrivalled natural Advantages. But these Advantages were of paramount Importance, both before and during the Revolutionary Struggle, when the Canoe of the Indian, or the Bateau of the *Voyageur*, furnished the most convenient and speedy Transportation, for Purposes either of Commerce or of War. Then, to the North, at the Head of Boat-navigation, the Hudson was connected, by an easy Portage, with Lakes George and Champlain; and through them with the St. Lawrence—the great River of the Canadas. Whilst, towards the West, its principal Affluent, the Mohawk, gave easy Access—scarcely interrupted by a few short Portages—to the Basin of the great Lakes, and to the magnificent River System of the Mississippi.

Thus established by Nature as the main Artery, connecting a vast Network of interior Water-communications with the Atlantick, and draining the

Resources of almost half a Continent, the Hudson occupied a Position of the first strategick Importance.

The British Ministry had been taught this Fact in the Course of the long Struggle between England and France, then but recently terminated. They knew, that by the Possession of the Hudson they could separate the Eastern Part of the Province of New York and the Provinces of New England from the Remainder of the Confederacy, and thus, by cutting off Communication between these Points, speedily reduce the Patriots to Subjection. Hence, in a Letter dated London, July 31st, 1775, conveying to the Colonists the Plan of Operations decided upon by the Ministry, it is said, that “their Design is to get Possession of New York and Albany; to fill both of these Cities with very strong Garrisons; to declare all Rebels who do not join the King’s Forces; to command the Hudson’s and East Rivers with a Number of small Men-of-War and Cutters stationed in different Parts of it, so as to cut off all Communication by Water between New York and the Provinces to the Northward of it, and between New York and Albany, except for the King’s Service, and to prevent also all Communication between the City

“ of New York and the Provinces of New Jersey,
 “ Pennsylvania, and those to the Southward of them.
 “ By these Means,” continues the Letter, “the Ad-
 “ ministration and their Friends fancy that they
 “ shall soon either starve out or retake the Garrisons
 “ of Crown Point and Ticonderoga, and open and
 “ maintain a safe Intercourse and Correspondence
 “ between Quebeck, Albany and New York, and
 “ thereby afford the fairest Opportunity to their
 “ Soldiery and the Canadians, in conjunction with
 “ the Indians, to be procured by G. J.,¹ to make
 “ continual Irruptions into New Hampshire, Massa-
 “ chusetts and Connecticut, and so distract and divide
 “ the Provincial Forces, as to render it easy for the
 “ British Army at Boston to defeat them, break the
 “ Spirits of the Massachusetts People, depopulate
 “ their Country, and compel an absolute Subjection
 “ to Great Britain.”²

¹Col. Guy Johnson, a Son-in-Law of Sir Wm. Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Province of New York. On the death of Sir William, Col. Johnson was appointed to the vacant Office—a Position that gave him great Influence with the Indian Tribes. In the

early Part of the Controversy with England, he succeeded in inducing a large Proportion of the Six Nations to engage in the Service of the King.

²Journal of the Provincial Congress of New York, 172.

But the Colonists were equally familiar with the Importance of maintaining Possession of the River. In a Report submitted by the Provincial Congress of New York to the Continental Congress, early in 1775, the Subject is thus treated: "If the Enemy
" persist in their Plan of subjugating these States to
" the Yoke of Great Britain, they must, in Proportion to their Knowledge of the Country, be more
" and more convinced of the Necessity of their
" becoming Masters of Hudson's River, which will
" give them the entire Command of the Water
" Communication with the Indian Nations, effectually prevent all Intercourse between the Eastern
" and Southern Confederates, divide our Strength
" and enfeeble every Effort for our common Preservation and Security. That this was their
" original Plan, and that Gen^l. Carleton and Gen^l.
" Howe flattered themselves with the delusive
" Hope of uniting their Forces at Albany, every
" Intelligence confirms, and it appears to the Committee that they will not give up this grand Object
" until they shall finally relinquish the Project of
" enslaving America."¹

¹ Jour. Prov. Conv. N. Y., 723.

With this brief Explanation of the nature which gave to Hudson's River the importance which it occupied in the Struggle for Independence, and of the Plans adopted by them to secure its Control, we come to consider the Means employed by the Colonists and the Efforts of the English. The generations of the Continental Forces are ample in our Histories—Ticonderoga, Saratoga Point, are written on their Pages in Characters Time can never dim. Still, there are many of Interest that have not been recorded especially so in regard to the Fortifications, Highlands and the Character and Number of Obstructions to the Navigation of the River. I supply Details in reference to the latter will be the leading Object of this Paper, from the Connexion existing between the former, also, will be incidentally noticed.

The Plan of Operations adopted by them while aiming at general Results, involved the Province of New York; and the Congress of that Province took early Steps to prevent its Consummation. Prior to the Re-

the Letter of July 31st, already quoted, the Provincial Congress had taken Action upon the Subject of fortifying the Highlands and obstructing the Navigation of the River, and had invited the prompt Action of the Continental Congress. On the 25th May, 1775, the latter Body communicated to the former a Series of Resolutions in reference to the Defence of New York, one of which is as follows:

“ *Resolved*, That a Post be taken in the Highlands, on each Side of Hudson’s River, and Batteries erected; * * * and that experienced Persons be immediately sent to examine said River, in order to discover where it will be most advisable and proper to obstruct the Navigation.”¹

This Resolution, together with the Others of the Series, received the Action of the Provincial Congress at its Session held May 30th, 1775, when the following Order was passed:

“ *Ordered*, That Col. Clinton and Mr. Tappan be a Committee (and that they take to their Assistance such Persons as they shall think necessary,) to go to the Highlands and view the Banks of Hudson’s River there; and report to this Con-

¹ Jour. Prov. Cong., 16.

“grefs the most proper Place for erect
 “more Fortifications; and likewise an
 “the Expense of erecting the same.”¹

This Committee made a Report on 1
 June, 1775, in which they suggested the
 of what were afterwards known as Fort
 and Montgomery. In their Report they

“Your Committee begs Leave to c
 “they are informed that by Means of
 “Booms, chained together on one Side c
 “ready to be drawn across, the Passage c
 “up to prevent any Vessel passing or r

On the 16th of June, 1775, the Prov
 grefs took this Suggestion into Consider
 passed the following Order :

“*Ordered*, That Col. Hoffman, Mr.
 “McDougall, and Mr. Paulding be a
 “to inquire into the Depth of Water i
 “River, from the City of New Yor
 “Windfor.”

We have searched in vain for the Re
 Committee; but it is not essential, a

¹ Jour. Prov. Cong., 20.

³ Ib., 45.

² Ib., 41.

Matter is shown by the Report of a Committee subsequently appointed for that Purpose. On the 18th August, 1775, the Provincial Congress passed the following Resolution :

“ *Resolved*, That the Fortifications formally¹ ordered by the Continental Congress, * * * be immediately erected.”

In Accordance with this Resolution, the Erection of Forts Clinton and Montgomery was immediately commenced, under the Supervision of a Committee of the Provincial Congress, assisted by Mr. Bernard Romans,² the Engineer appointed for

¹ Thus printed in the *Journal*; but is written *formerly* in Original, in the Office of Secretary of State, at Albany.

² BERNARD ROMANS was born in Holland, but early in Life removed to England, where he studied the Profession of an Engineer. He was employed as such by the British Government, some Time before the Revolution, in her Southern American Provinces; although the first Notice that we find of him is in a Manuscript in Harvard Library, written by John Gerard Wil-

liam de Brahm¹ where he is mentioned as a Resident of Florida, from 1763 to 1771, as a Draughtsman. It also appears that, pre-

¹ We gathered this Fact from Mr. Fairbanks's recent *History of St. Augustine*, p. 165, where the Author's Name is misprinted John Gerard Williams de Bahm. Mr. J. L. Sibley, Librarian at Harvard, in a Letter relating to this Manuscript, says that the Author has subscribed his Name John Gerard William de Brahm; while a Copyist had written it in the same Volume, William Gerard de Brahm; the latter is also the Form in which it stands on the Title Page of the Book he published in connection with Bernard Romans on the Gulf Passage.

the Purpose by the Continental Congress Suggestions of the Committee of May 2

vious to his Employment in the Capacity of Engineer for the Construction of Defences in the Highlands, he was in the Enjoyment of a Pension from the British Crown, of about £50 Sterling per Year, as Botanist in Florida. From a Paper on the Mariner's Compass, which he communicated to the American Philosophical Society, we learn that he was still at St. Augustine in 1773. (*Trans.* 11, 396.) In 1775 he published in New York the first Volume of a Natural History of Florida;¹ the second Volume, although announced as *in press*, we do not find to have been issued. He also published the same Year, a Map of the Seat of Civil War in America. Whilst at the North he became imbued with the revolutionary Spirit, and the New York Committee of Safety engaged his Services as Engineer, at \$50 per Month, to construct Defences in the Highlands. He entered upon the Duties of that Office on the 29th August, 1775, with the Encourage-

¹ See Title in full in Duyckinck's *Cyc. Am. Literature*, 1, 303.

ment, as he alleged, his Pension in the Continent the 18th of September, 1775, his Plans and Estimates of erecting the Fortifications (4 Forces, 111, 732-36), and offered for the Completion of £5000, the Ordnance. The Committee, he proposed to employ him at a Salary the Pay of a Colonel in the Continental Army. On October he applied for a Commission, with the Rank of Colonel. Whilst this was pending the Congress came dissatisfied with his Services, and the Matter was referred to the Committee for their Decision. This very result in the Congress Mr. Romans, and Congress appointed to fill his Place. Correspondence between the Committee is given in the *Journal of Provincial Congress*, 100-6. On the 8th of 1776, he was commissioned as Captain of a Company

in regard to Obstructing the Navigation of the River, do not, however, appear to have been acted

Artillery,¹ destined for the Invasion of Canada as a Part of the Northern Army. On the 18th of March, he applied to the New York Committee of Safety for Pay up to the Date of his new Commission, stating that the Time had expired in which he was to have appeared at the Head of his Company, which want of Money prevented. The next we learn of him, he was sent back from Canada to Albany to be tried, in May, 1776 (4 *Am. Archives*, vi, 413), for Misconduct, "a String of Complaints" having been lodged against him; the Purport of which was, that he countenanced, or failed to discountenance, the Depredations committed by his Men upon the People of the Country which they quartered in; and on the 27th July following he was again tried for some Difficulty with his Lieutenant. The Result of these Trials does not appear, but it is inferred that he

¹ The Names, Rank, Dates of Commissions and Times of Enlistment of the Officers and Privates of his Company, from Feb. 8, to Nov. 28, 1776, when encamped at Ticonderoga, may be found in Saffell's *Records of the Revolution*, p. 178.

was honourably acquitted; for he continued in the Service, and early in November was deputed, by Gen. Gates, to inspect the Works at Fort Anne and Skeneborough, the Condition of which he reported with much Ability; and in the same Month, the Pennsylvania Council of Safety directed that he should be furnished with such Materials as he might require to perform an Experiment, in Order to give a Specimen of his Skill in destroying distant Objects by Fire. (5 *Am. Archives*, iii.) Unfortunately we do not find the Result of this Experiment. In 1778 he published at Hartford, Conn., the first Volume of his *Annals of the Troubles in the Netherlands*; and the second Volume¹ was Printed at

¹ As the Existence of this second Volume is often questioned, the exact Title is here given: *Annals | of the Troubles | in the | Netherlands | from the | Accession of Charles V | Emperor of Germany | A proper and seasonable Mirror for the present Americans | collected and translated from the most approved Historians in the Native Tongues | By Bernard Romans | Vol. II | Hartford | Hudson & Goodwin | M.D.CC.LXXXII.*

upon—farther than to order the Sur-
tioned—until the subsequent Year (1779

the same Place in 1782. He also published in England, in 1779, in Connection with Capt. de Brahm, A Compleat Pilot for the Gulf Passage, a Subject which is treated of in his Work upon Florida. On the 28th Jan., 1779, he married Elizabeth Whiting (*Certificate of Rev. Mark Tucker*) of Wetherfield, Ct., who died in New York, 12th May, 1848, aged 89 (*Memorandum by Peter Force, Esq.*). Her Miniature, beautifully painted by Romans, is still preserved in the Family (*Dr. Wm. Dolby of N. Y.*). We find no other Trace of him except in the Deposition of his Widow, made for the Purpose of obtaining a Pension, 15th Oct., 1845, on File in the Pension Office at Washington, which, divested of its legal Technicalities, is substantially as follows: That he continued in the Line of his Duty as an Officer until 1780, about eighteen Months after his Marriage, when he was ordered to go to the State of South Carolina, there to join the Southern Army; that shortly thereafter he sailed from New Haven or New London for the Place of his Destination, with all on Board, on the Passage by the British Ship, arrived to Montego Bay, he was held in Captivity till the Close of the War in 1783. The British Authorities, at that Time, were applied to for Permission to deliver him up, which was declined on the Ground of his Ability to do Injury to British Interests; that he was by the British Authorities, on the Pretext of sending him to some Port in the United States, was said to have died, though, from Circumstances, inducing his Demise, his Friends Reason to believe that he was fully murdered. That of his Widow for her services rejected on the Ground of Service performed by her, never meritorious, voluntary, and therefore not eligible for by the Pension Law. (*Whiting, Esq., Com.*) a Diary of the progress of his Life, he composed, been the first Survey

on the 16th of July, a few Days after the Declaration of Independence, the Provincial Convention¹ again took up the Matter, and appointed a *Secret Committee* to take the whole Subject in charge; as will be seen by the following Resolutions:

“ *Resolved, unanimously*, That a Secret Committee
 “ be appointed to devise and carry into Execution
 “ such Measures as to them shall appear most
 “ Effectual for Obstructing the Channel of Hudson’s River, or annoying the Enemy’s Ships in
 “ their Passage up said River; and that this Convention Pledge themselves for defraying the
 “ Charges incident thereto.

“ *Resolved*, That Mr. Jay, Mr. Robert Yates,²

As a Mathematician, an Artist, an Author, or as a Publick Man, he seems to have been regarded by all, except the New York Committee of Safety, as a choice Spirit. He left one Son, Bernard Hubertus, who died near Havana of Yellow Fever, leaving an only Son of the same Name.

Ordered, that the Style or Title of this House be changed from that of *The Provincial Congress of the Colony of New York*, to that of *The Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York*. (*Journal*, 1, 519.)

² ROBERT YATES was born at Schenectady, New York, 27th Jan., 1738, and became an eminent Lawyer in Albany; was a Member of the Board of Alderman in the latter City from 1771 to 1775;

¹ The Title of the Legislature of the State was changed on the 10th July, 1776, from *Congress* to *Convention*, as follows: Resolved and

“Major C. Tappan, Mr. Robert R. Liv
“Mr. Paulding be said Committee.”

At this Point the Congressional and
Records cease to help us in our Inv
The Proceedings of the Provincial Con
indeed, make frequent References to th
tions, but they are brief and unsatisfact
furnish no Means of identifying and un
the Objects and Events to which t
Fortunately, however, the Original Min
Proceedings of the Secret Committee,
16th July, 1776, have been recently
by Mr. James C. Bolton, among the P
Grand-father, Gen. James Clinton. I
Minutes, Mr. Bolton has found Maps of
at Fort Montgomery, showing the Mann
it was fastened and floated, and the Char

wrote under the Signature *The* 1788 was a Mem
Rough Hewer, under which *Sou-* vention which rati
briquet he was known; was a Constitution; was
Member of the Provincial Con- Secret Proceedings
gress from 1775 to 1777, and the Convention of
Chairman of the Committee for after his Death.
Military Operations; in 1777 was ticular Account of
appointed Judge of the Supreme *Council of Revision*
Court; and in 1790 Chief Justice;

Booms placed in Front of it; together with many other Papers of great Value relating to the Obstructions at Fort Washington and Pollopel's Island. These long-hidden and valuable Documents receive additional Illustration from a Relick of the Original Obstruction at West Point, which was raised from the River's Bed, by Bishop's Derrick, in 1855.¹ Collating and combining this Mass of new and important Materials, with that to be derived from the Proceedings of the Provincial Convention, and from other previously known Sources, we find that a Flood of Light is thrown upon the Subject, enabling us to get a clear and complete Idea of it, in whole and in detail.

There were four Points at which it was fought to obstruct the Navigation of the River, by means, either singly or combined, of *Fire Ships*, *Booms*, *Chains*, and *Chevaux-de-Frise*. The *First* was at

¹ This interesting Relick is now deposited at Washington's Head Quarters, Newburgh. It is the Property of E. Carter, Esq., of Newburgh, to whose Exertions the Publick are mainly indebted for the valuable Collection of Manuscripts and Revolutionary Relicks now preserved in this old, temporary, Home of Washington. The Papers of Gen. James Clinton, referred to in the Text, have found a fitting resting Place in the same Collection, having been there deposited by his Grand-son, Mr. Bolton. Washington's Head Quarters was purchased, several Years since, by the State of New York, and is now under its especial Care and Protection.

Fort Washington, the *Second* at Fort Montgomery, the *Third* at Pollopel's Island, and the *Fourth* at West Point. The Fire Ships and Obstructions at Fort Washington were constructed in the Summer of 1776; the Obstructions at Fort Montgomery and Pollopel's Island in the Autumn of 1776 and Springs of 1777 and 1778; and those at West Point in 1778. We propose to notice these several Obstructions in their chronological Order.



I.
O B S T R U C T I O N
BY MEANS OF
F I R E S H I P S .



THE
O B S T R U C T I O N
OF THE
NAVIGATION OF THE RIVER
BY MEANS OF
FIRE SHIPS AND RAFTS.

ANTERIOR to the Appointment of the Secret Committee, there had been some Discussion, in reference to the Modes to be employed in obstructing the Navigation of the River. Among other Propositions, the Plan of constructing Fire Ships, or Rafts, which had been introduced by Capt. Hazelwood,¹ on the Delaware, was favorably received by the Convention; and it also met the Approval of both Gen. Washington and

¹ JOHN HAZELWOOD was a resident of the City of Philadelphia, and was employed by the Committee of Safety of that City, to whom he communicated the Plan of constructing Fire Ships and Rafts for the

Gov. Clinton.¹ Early in July, 1776, Washington issued Orders, to the Committee having Charge of the Construction of the Continental Frigates at Poughkeepsie, to equip a number of Fire Rafts and Vessels. In obedience to this Order, the Work was immediately commenced.²

On the Appointment of the Secret Committee,

Defence of the Delaware River. The Legislature of Pennsylvania, at the Suggestion of the Committee of Philadelphia, authorized the Construction of a Fleet of these Vessels, and gave him the Commission of Captain. He was sent to Poughkeepsie by the Committee of Safety of Philadelphia, for the Purpose of Aiding the Secret Committee. (See *Letter from Wm. Duer* under head of Fort Washington.) After his Return from New York, he was raised to the Rank of Commodore, by the Order of Gen. Greene, Oct. 7, 1777 (*Sparks*, v., 77), and rendered efficient Service at the Attack on Fort Mercer, Oct. 21, 1777, and in the subsequent Operations on the Delaware River, and was honored by Congress with a Sword. His Fleet was dispersed at the Capture of Forts Mercer and Mifflin, Nov. 21, 1777.

¹ "FORT CONSTITUTION, }
" July 14, 1776. }

"I Approve of much of your
"Plan for making Fire Rafts, and
"doubt not you will carry the same
"into Execution with the utmost

"Expedition. I think it advisable
"to purchase two other old Sloops,
"or more, if necessary, for the
"Purpose, but let it be done in
"the cheapest Manner—the old-
"est and worst Sloops will do. * *

"GEO. CLINTON.

"To Secret Committee."

(*Clinton Papers, State Lib.*)

² "POUGHKEEPSIE, }
" July 16, 1776. }

"As you were pleased to for-
"ward us Genl. Washington's Or-
"ders to complete a Number of
"Fire Rafts and Fire Vessels, we
"have the Pleasure to inform you
"that four Fire Rafts will be
"launched this Evening. To-
"morrow, we propose to fix them
"in the best Manner we can with
"dry Wood, Tar and such other
"Combustibles as we can procure
"at this Place. Two or three old
"Vessels we shall fix as fast as possi-
"ble for the same Purpose. We
"shall send the Fire Rafts down to
"Col. Clinton as soon as com-
"pleted." * * * * *

(*Letter from J. Van Zandt to
Gov. Clinton.*)

however, the Construction of Fire Ships passed into their Hands; and in their Minutes of July 25th, we find the following, among other Instructions issued to the Artizans and Agents employed by them :

“ 2d. The Building and Fitting out *ten* Fire Rafts, and Preparing such Vessels as they may be furnished with for Fire Ships, and sending the Same down to Fort Constitution as soon as made. Also 12 Fire Grappling Irons.¹

* * * * *

“ 4th. To get 1000 Fire Arrows made and fixed.”

At the Meeting of the Committee on the 27th, the following Memorandum of Articles to be procured was entered in the Minutes :

“ Light Wood and Pine Knots for Fire Vessels, to be got at Esopus and Albany.

“ Mr. Tappan to procure three old Sloops and send them down to Poughkeepsie loaded with those Knots and Light Wood, and as much Pitch, Tar, Turpentine, and Tar-Tubs and Barrels, as can be got.

“ Mr. Livingston and Mr. Yates to procure the same Number of Sloops and to send them down

¹ The Grappling Iron has Radiating Hooks at the end, intended to catch in the Rigging of an enemy's Vessel, and thus fasten the Fire Ship alongside.

22 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

“loaded with the same Materials. The Pitch,
“Tar, and Turpentine not to exceed 100 Barrels.
“Also, Oakum and Junks¹ of Rope. Also, to
“Procure 100 Ash Oars from 14 to 20 feet long.

“Mr. G. Livingston to procure six Long Boats
“and send them to Poughkeepsie. To get about
“twelve Fire Grappling Irons made. To get
“1000 Fire Arrows made. To fit up one or two
“armed Sloops at Albany. To send to Salisbury
“for all the Cannon and all the Shot that can be
“procured there.”

The Plan evidently was, to draw these Rafts across the River in a Line.² The Fire Arrows were Intended to be discharged in such Manner as to communicate Fire to the Sails of approaching Vessels, while the Fire Rafts were to be cut from their Moorings and propelled against their Hulls. The Combustibles being simultaneously ignited, the Vessels assailed would almost instantly be wrapped in Flames. The Fire Ships were charged under the Direction of Capt. Hazelwood, whose Services in this Respect will be found detailed in the following Certificate, which also contains a List of the Materials used by him :

¹ Junk is old Rope, cut into short lengths.

“Poughkeepsie arrived with the
“Fire Rafts, and To-morrow or
“next Day hope to be able to

² “August 2, 1776. This Day
“some of the Carpenters from

“draw them across the River.”
(*Mem. by Gov. Clinton.*)

“POUGHKEEPSIE, Aug. 26th, 1776.

“2 Brls of Spirits of Turpentine.

“6 gals. of Spirit of Wine.

“60 Hand Grenade Shells complete.

“12 strong Port Fires.

“10 lbs. Slow Matches.

“10 lbs. Spun Cotton.

“The several Articles mentioned in the above
“List, were brought up here by Capt. Hazelwood
“to Poughkeepsie, part of which Articles have
“been used by him in charging a Fire Vessel here
“and left the Remainder for that Use.”

“CHRISTR. TAPPEN.

“GILBERT LIVINGSTON.

“Copy.”

Having charged one Vessel, and given proper
Instructions as to the Manner of charging the others,
Capt. Hazelwood left Poughkeepsie. The Secret
Committee certified to his Services as follows :

“POUGHKEEPSIE, Aug. 26, 1776.

“SIR :

“Captain Hazelwood, who came up to us
“by Request of Convention, has fitted a Fire Vessel,
“as we Conceive in a Masterly Manner, and
“has given such Instructions to some Persons we
“have here employed with respect to mixing Fire
“Combustibles, &c., that we think we can now

“carry on our Works without further Assistance,”
&c.

“CHRISTR. TAPPEN.

“GILBERT LIVINGSTON.

“TO ABM. YATES,

“Pref’t Provincial Congress.”

At a Meeting of the Convention held August 29th, 1776, the following Resolution passed :

“The Convention having been informed by
“their Secret Committee of the Service of Capt.
“Hazelwood, in preparing Fire Rafts, and giving
“useful Information relative to the Obstructing the
“Navigation of Hudson’s River, think him entitled
“to the Thanks of this House : and as a Compen-
“sation for his Expenses and Trouble,

“Ordered, That the Treasurer of this Conven-
“tion pay to the said Captaine Hazelwood, three
“hundred Dollars,” &c.

The Fire Ships were subjected to an early Test. The British Frigates *Rosé* and *Phœnix* having passed, in July, the Obstructions at Fort Washington, and ascended the River as far as Yonkers, it was agreed upon that they should be attacked. The Night of the 16th of August was selected for the Purpose. The Action was witnessed, from the High Grounds at Yonkers, by Gen. Heath, Gen. Clinton, and Others, and it is thus described in Heath’s Memoirs :

On the Evening of Aug. 16th, Gen. Heath, accompanied by Gen. Clinton and other Officers, took a proper Position on the Bank of the Hudson. "The Night," says Heath himself, "was pretty dark; we soon found that the Gallies and Fire Vessels were silently moving up with the Tide. After some Time, and almost immediately after the Sentinels on Board the English Ships had passed the Word, 'All is well,' two of the Fire Vessels flashed into a Blaze; the One close on the side of the Phœnix, and the Other grappling one of the Tenders. To Appearances, the Flames were against the side of the Phœnix; and there was much Confusion on Board. A Number of Cannon were discharged into the Fire Vessel in order to sink her. A Number of Seamen ascended and got out on the Yard-Arm, supposed to clear away some of the Grapplings. The Fire Vessel was along side, as was judged, near Ten Minutes, when the Phœnix either cut or slipped her Cables, let fall her Fore Top Sail, wore round and stood up the River, being immediately veiled from the Spectators by the Darkness of the Night. The Rose and the other two Tenders remained at their Moorings."

Additional Particulars in Reference to the Transaction are given in the following Letter from Gen. Washington to Gov. Trumbull,¹ under Date of August 18th:

¹ Sparks, iv, 54.

* * “ On the Night of the 16th, two of our
“ Fire Vessels attempted to burn the Ships of War
“ up the River. One of these boarded the Phœnix
“ of Forty-Four Guns, and was Grappled with her
“ for some Minutes, but unluckily she cleared her-
“ self. The only Damage the Enemy sustained
“ was the Destruction of one Tender. It is agreed
“ on all Hands, that our People engaged in this
“ Affair, behaved with great Resolution and Intre-
“ pidity. One of the Captains, Thomas, it is to
“ be feared, perished in the attempt or in making
“ his Escape by Swimming, as he has not been
“ heard of. His Bravery entitled him to a better
“ Fate. Though this Enterprize did not succeed
“ to our Wishes, I incline to think it alarmed the
“ Enemy greatly; for this Morning the Phœnix
“ and Rose, with their Two remaining Tenders,
“ taking advantage of a brisk and prosperous Gale
“ and favorable Tide, quitted their Stations, and
“ have returned and joined the rest of the Fleet.”

The Vessels were considerably injured in their downward Passage, in passing the American Batteries at Fort Washington and Harlem River. The Tender, which had been burnt by the Fire Ships, was towed down to the Fort the Day after the Affair, although under the Fire of the Enemy's Cannon. This was effected by a Lieutenant and two Men, in a Manner that reflected great Credit upon their Enterprize and Courage. A Six-pounder Cannon,

three smaller ones, and ten Swivels were taken out of the Tender.

A full Account of the Manner in which the Fire Ships were charged, and also of the Attack on the British Frigates, was published in the *Worcester Magazine*, in 1826, in a Sketch of the Life of Joseph Bais, of Leicester. It will fittingly conclude this Division of our Subject. Mr. Bais states that at the Time of the Occurrence he was attached to the Water Service, under the Command of Commodore Tupper, who was directed to man the Fire Ships designated for the Service. The Commodore selected Bais to take Charge of one, and put the other under the Command of Captain Thomas, who belonged to New London. The Vessel commanded by Bais was a Sloop, called the Polly, of about one hundred Tons burthen, nearly new. That commanded by Thomas, was of a smaller Size. The Frigates lay about eight Miles above Kingsbridge, but having had Intimations that they might be attacked, removed their Station towards the western Shore of the River, where the Water was deeper than on the east Side.

The Fire Ships had been prepared with Faggots of the most combustible Kinds of Wood, which had been dipped in melted Pitch, and with Bundles of Straw cut, about a Foot long, prepared in the same Manner. These Faggots and Bundles filled the Deck and Hold as far aft as the Cabin; and into this Mass of combustible Materials was inserted a

Match, that might be fired by a Person in the Cabin ; who would have Time to escape, through a Door cut in the Side of the Vessel, into a Whale Boat that was lashed to the Quarter of the Sloop. Besides these Combustibles, there were in each Vessel ten or twelve Barrels of Pitch. A quantity of Canvass, amounting to many Yards, was cut into Strips, about a Foot in Width, then dipped in Spirits of Turpentine and hung upon the Spars and Rigging, extending down to the Deck. Every thing had been so prepared that but a Moment's Time was required to set the whole Vessel in a Blaze.

The Fire Ships started from the Spuyten Duyvel Creek about Dark, with a south Wind and a favorable Tide. The Night was Cloudy and Dark, with occasionally a little Rain. Bais had nine Men attached to his Vessel, three of whom he stationed in the Whale Boat, four had Charge of the Grappling Irons, and one acted as Pilot, while Bais stationed himself in the Cabin to fire the Materials.

Besides the two British Frigates, there was a Bomb Ketch and two Tenders; which were moored near them. They were anchored in a Line about North and South ; first the Phœnix of about 44 Guns ; next the Rose of 36 Guns ; then the Bomb Ketch, and above it the Tenders. As the Night was Dark, and the Fire Ships kept near the Middle of the River, they were not aware that they were near the British Vessels, until they heard, immedi-

ately on their Left, the striking of the Bells, and the Cry of the Sentinel's, *all's well*. It was twelve o'Clock, and little did those who were slumbering there imagine the Destruction that hung over them. The Shore was bold and rose above the Mafts; and, in its dark Shadow, the Americans could not distinguish the Situations of the Vessels, neither could they ascertain their Size, or which of them were Frigates. Bafs was a considerable Distance in Advance of Thomas, and, upon hearing the Cry of the Sentinels, he immediately bore down upon the Line of the British Fleet. He was already very near the Bomb Ketch before he was discovered by the Enemy, and soon struck her. The Grappling Irons were made fast in an Instant—the Whale Boat was ready to cast off—the Match was applied, and both Vessels were almost immediately in a Blaze. Bafs and his Crew made their way to the Shore, while the Panic-struck Crew of the Ketch were seen pouring from their Quarters in the utmost Consternation. Several of them perished in the Flames, others jumped into the Water, and were rescued by the other Vessels of the Fleet; and the Ketch soon burned so as to part from her Moorings, when she drifted on Shore, and was consumed to the Water's Edge.

Capt. Thomas was not so fortunate. He was far in the Rear, and the Light from Bafs's Ship showed his Position to the Enemy; who opened a vigorous Cannonade and prepared themselves to meet the

Attack. But, nothing daunted by being discovered, he bore down on the *Phoenix*, and became grappled with her. He then applied the Match to the Combustibles, but in such a way that his retreat to the Boat was cut off, and he was obliged to leap overboard to escape the Flames. Five of his Men were compelled to follow his Example, and not being able to reach the Boat, all perished in the Water.

Notwithstanding the *Phoenix* was on Fire in several Places, she was saved from Destruction by cutting away Portions of her Rigging, and slipping her Cables. In the Attack, the Enemy lost nearly seventy Men, besides some Women and Children who were on board the Ketch.

Although there are, in Official Documents, some farther Allusions to the Fire Ships, they appear to have been found impracticable, as their Use was soon after abandoned. On the 5th Sept., 1776, Mr. Duane, from a Committee appointed to visit the Highlands and examine the State of Defences there, reported, among other things, "That the Fire Rafts are in such a State as not to be fit for use, having in part, Water in them; and that the General (Clinton) does not know what to do with them." Their Destruction was probably completed at the reduction of the Forts in October; and as Experience had not proved that their use was practicable, none were fitted out afterwards.

II.

O B S T R U C T I O N

A T

FORT WASHINGTON.



THE
O B S T R U C T I O N S
AT
FORT WASHINGTON.



THE Obstructions to the Navigation of Hudson's River at Fort Washington are almost entirely lost Sight of in the general Histories of the Revolution. This is probably due to the Fact that they were placed there in the most secret Manner; and that all the Preparations connected with them, were *covered under the Design of obstructing the East River.* Forming, as they did, an important Part in the Plans for the Defeat of the Enemy, and for the Defence of New York, they were, however, regarded as of the most urgent Necessity. The following Letter from Mr. Duer to the Secret Com-

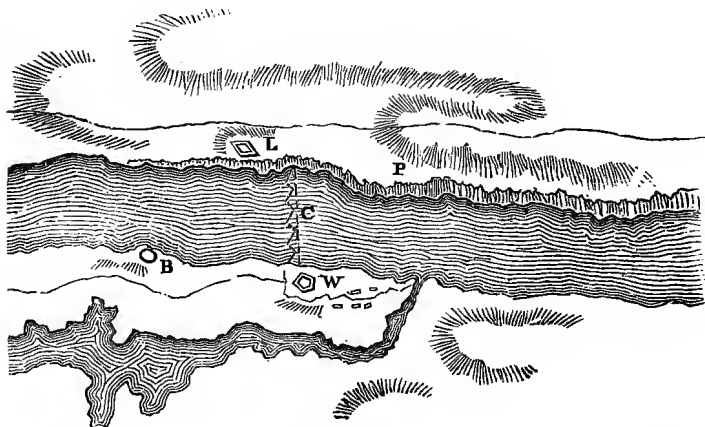
mittee, which we find among the Clinton Papers, reveals the Facts here stated :

“ WHITE PLAINS, Sunday 21st July, 1776.

“ DEAR GENTL :

“ I have just arrived at this Place from New York where I have conversed with Genl. Washington on the Purport of the Letter from the Secret Committee.¹

“ Gens. Putnam and Mifflin have made an exact Survey of the River opposite Mount Washington



B—Bloomingdale. W—Fort Washington. L—Fort Lee. P—Palisades.
C—Chevaux-de-frize.

“ and find that the Depth in no Part exceeds seven Fathoms; the Width, however, of the Channel (which is from three to seven Fathoms) is not much less than 1800 Yards, the shallow Part of

¹ The Draft of this Letter is not in the Collection of Manuscripts.

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 35

“the River running in an oblique Direction. Genl. Washington expresses himself extremely anxious about the Obstruction of that Channel, and Measures are daily used for executing that Purpose. It is impossible to procure Vessels enough at New York, so that the Measure must be delayed till such Time as more Vessels can be brought through the Sound from Connecticut; however, I am not without Apprehensions that this Resource will be cut off, as I understand that some of the Enemy's Vessels have sailed out of the Hook, with an Intention (probably) of cutting off our Communication with the Sound.

“It is, however, an Object of so much Importance that no Difficulties, however great, ought to deter us from our Attempts to carry it into execution; *if we succeed, the Designs of the Enemy in this Campaign are effectually baffled*—if we fail, we cannot be in a more lamentable Situation than we are now.

“Exclusive of the great Advantage we should reap in obstructing the Channel so far to the southward, it is, I fear, the only Place we can depend upon shallowing¹ to the southward of the Highlands, whilst the Men-of-War are in the River, for if proper Batteries are erected near the Water at Mount Washington, and on the opposite Side, mounted with Guns of 18, 24 and 32 Pound-

¹ Sufficiently shallow.

“ers, it will not be practicable for any Vessels to be
 “so near as to prevent our working under the
 “Cover of these Works. I have strongly urged
 “Genl. Washington to send Genl. Mifflin some
 “heavier Metal, and he seems half inclined. This
 “necessary Operation has not yet taken Place.

“The Genl. is anxious to have either of you
 “(as Members of the Secret Committee) to be
 “with him in Town, and has authorized me to
 “make the Offer to you of his House during your
 “Residence. Let me entreat One of you imme-
 “diately to come Down, and not to quit Genl.
 “Washington till such Time as this Measure on
 “which our Safety depends is effected. There is
 “such a Languor and Procrastination in our mili-
 “tary Operations in that City and the true Object
 “of this appears to me so much mistaken, that I
 “am confident either of your Presences, in Order
 “to press on the Obstructions of that Channel,
 “will be highly useful. There is another Con-
 “sideration which I hope will induce one of you
 “to repair immediately to New York. The Com-
 “mittee of Safety of Philadelphia have sent three
 “Persons to New York in Order to assist us in
 “making Fire Ships—one of them, a Mr. Hazel-
 “wood, with whom I have conversed is particu-
 “larly Clever. The Fire Ships charged in his
 “Manner must, I am confident, prove Destructive
 “to any Vessel they fix upon. I have spoken con-
 “cerning our Wish to destroy the Phœnix and

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“Rose, now in this River, and he is ready to undertake it, not doubting but he will meet with generous Encouragement. I applied to Genl. Washington to get Leave for him to come up the River; but his Presence will still be wanted in Town, for the Ships there Loading, till this Day Week, when he will wait on your Committee if you send him Notice by Express. He Lodges at Mrs. Graham’s in Broad Street. I flatter myself, however, that either one or the other of you will set off for Town immediately on the receipt of this Letter, in which case you can engage him in our Service, and send him up immediately with the necessary Apparatus.

“For News, I must refer you to Mr. Paulding who left New York at the same Time with myself. I shall set off for Connecticut To-Morrow where I think my Presence is Necessary. No more than 1900 of the Connecticut Quota had joined our Forces when I left Town.

“I had almost forgot to tell you that this Design of obstructing the Channel near Mifflin’s is covered under the Pretext of preparing Vessels for obstructing the Channel of East River. It will, therefore, be advisable that your Conversation should give a Coloring to this Matter.

“I am, very Sincerely, yours, &c.,

“WM. DUER.”

“P. S. For God’s sake exert yourself to secure the Sea Vessels which are in the River.”

The Obstructions, at this Point, were placed across the River, between Forts Washington and Lee, and under the Command of their Guns, and were Completed only a short Time before the Reduction of the former Fort by the English, on the 16th of November, 1776. They were made principally under the Direction of Persons in the Employ of the Continental Congress, although Originally commenced by the Convention of the State of New York. Material Aid in their Construction was contributed by the Secret Committee.

In the *Journal of the Provincial Convention*, we find that these Obstructions received the Attention of that Body in the early Part of the Year 1776. It was then determined to obstruct the Navigation of the River at this Point by *Chevaux-de-Frise*, and the Work of their Construction was immediately commenced, and some of them sent down and sunk.

For the purpose of hastening the completion of the Obstructions, however, Gen. Putnam proposed the Plan of sinking Ships. This Plan is briefly Stated in a Letter from Gen. Putnam to Gen. Gates, dated July 26, 1776,¹ as follows :

* * “ We are preparing *Chevaux-de-Frise*, at
 “ which we make great Despatch by the Help of
 “ Ships, which are to be sunk ; a Scheme of Mine,
 “ which you may be assured is very Simple, a Plan
 “ of which I send you. The two Ships’ Sterns lie

¹ Sparks’ iv, 30.

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 39

“ towards each other, about seventy Feet apart.
“ Three large Logs, which reach from Ship to
“ Ship, are fastened to them. The two Ships and
“ Logs stop the River two hundred and eighty
“ Feet. The Ships are to be sunk, and, when
“ hauled down on one side, the Picks will be raised
“ to a proper Height, and they must inevitably stop
“ the River, if the Enemy will let us sink them.”

Finding the depth of the Water greater than had been supposed, however, the Work was abandoned, and some of the Frames of the *Chevaux-de-Frise* first sunk were permitted to float up from their places. On the 12th September, 1776, the Convention called the Attention of Gen. Clinton to the Matter, as follows :

“ *Ordered*, That Robt. Harper prepare a Draft
“ of a Letter to Gen. Geo. Clinton, requesting
“ him to inform the Convention of the State of
“ the *Chevaux-de-Frise* and other Obstructions to
“ the Navigation of the River opposite to Fort
“ Washington.”

Mr. Harper drafted the Letter accordingly. It was as follows :

“ SIR :

“ Being informed by a Member of the Con-
“ vention, that some of the *Cheveaux-de-Frise* in-
“ tended to be effectually sunk in Hudson’s River,
“ were a few Days ago floating with the Tide, I
“ am Directed to request the Favor of you to in-
“ form me what Probability there is of the Per-

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“ manence of those Machines, their Distance, and
“ whether you conceive the Navigation of the
“ Enemy’s Fleet is thereby Obstructed.

“ I am, Sir, &c.,

“ ROBT. HARPER.

“ To Gen. Geo. Clinton.”

Gen. Clinton’s reply to this Letter we have not been able to find ; but it is not Essential. At its Session on the 17th of that Month, the Convention, in a Preamble and Resolution, doubted the Correctness of the Soundings which had been made in the River at Fort Washington, and directed Capt. Thos. Greenhill to retake the same, and to conduct the “Matter with all the *Secrecy* possible.” The Report of Capt. Greenhill does not appear, and as there is nothing in the Proceedings of the Convention indicating that the Work was afterwards under its Direction, it is to be presumed that the duty of completing the Obstructions passed over to the Continental Authorities, or more directly to Gen. Washington, who was at that time making Arrangements for the Defence of New York City.

On the 20th September, 1776, Gen. Washington, anticipating an Attack from the British Vessels of War at New York, sent a Request to the Convention, that they would send to Fort Washington some of the Fire Ships which had been prepared by Capt. Hazelwood, where they would “ be Ready to Act in case the Ships should Attempt

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 41

“to come up.” In accordance with this Request, the Convention, on the 21st Sept., passed the following Order :

“*Ordered*, That Gilbert Livingston, Esq., or any other Member of the Committee who may be now at Poughkeepsie, do immediately dispatch the two Fire Ships, prepared and charged by Capt. Hazlewood, with proper Persons to navigate them, under the Cover of the Guns of the said Fort, and there deliver them to the Care of such Person as His Excellency Gen. Washington has or shall appoint to take Charge of them.”

At this Session of the Convention, a Letter from the Quarter-Master General to Capt. Cook was read, in which the latter was directed “to purchase and procure Timber and oak Plank, with all possible Dispatch, for the Use of the Army;” and also “to purchase Vessels, or take them at an Appraisement, for completing the Obstructions to the Navigation of Hudson’s River opposite to Mount Washington.” The Convention appointed a Committee to confer with Capt. Cook for the Purpose of ascertaining what Aid “he expected of the Convention in the Premises.” As the Result of this Conference the Committee reported the following Resolutions, which were adopted by the Convention, viz :

“*Resolved*, That the Secret Committee for obstructing the Navigation of Hudson’s River be empowered and directed to purchase or impress

“ for the Service of the State any Number of Vessels not exceeding six, which they shall think best calculated for the Purpose of completing the Obstructions in the Hudson’s River opposite to Mount Washington—that they cause an Appraisement of the said Vessels to be made by Persons under Oath, in the most equitable and expeditious Manner possible in order that Satisfaction may be hereafter made by this Convention to the Owners of such Vessels; and it is recommended to the said Committee to request the Services of Capt. Thomas Grenell in ballasting, navigating and delivering those Vessels to Capt. Cooke at Fort Washington.

“ *Resolved*, That the said Committee be directed to send all the Oak Plank which they may have in their Possession, to Mount Washington with the utmost Dispatch.”

Up to the Time of the Passage of these Resolutions, the Secret Committee do not appear to have had any Connection with the Obstructions at Fort Washington, their Attention having been entirely given to those at Fort Montgomery. On the Receipt of these Orders, however, the Committee proceeded to execute them, as is shown by their Minutes :

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“POUGHKEEPSIE, Sept. 23d, 1776.

“At a Meeting of the Secret Committee of the

“Convention of the State of New York: Pre-

“sent, Robert Yates, Chn., Mr. Wisner, Mr.

“Livingston, Mr. Harper.

“The Convention of this State, by their Resolve

“of the 21st Inst., have empowered this Committee

“to purchase or impress a Number of Vessels, not

“exceeding six, to complete the Obstructions in

“Hudson’s River near Mount Washington, and to

“request the Services of Capt. Grenell in navigat-

“ing those Vessels down.

“By another Resolve of the same Date, the

“Superintendants for building the Frigate are re-

“quested to send their short Plank to the same

“Place; and

“By a third Resolve of the same Date, the said

“Committee are requested to send down two Fire

“Ships charged by Capt. Hazlewood to the same

“Place.

“The Committee having taken the same into

“Consideration do Resolve immediately to send

“down the Fire Vessel Mary Anna, and to request

“the Superintendant of the Shipyards to spare a

“few Hands for navigating her.

“Resolved, That Capt. Casewell load the Sloop

“Cambden with all such Plank as can be spared at

“the Yards, and carry the same down to Spiten-

“Devil—and that the Superintendants be requested

“(pursuant to the Resolve of Convention), to give

“him all the Plank out of the Yards which can be

“pared. That a Letter be wrote to Mr. Moylan,
 “the Quarter-Master General, requesting him to
 “pay for the Plank, &c.

“*Resolved*, farther, That the Sloop Clinton, pur-
 “chased by this Committee be sent down to Mount
 “Washington in order to be sunk there for obstruct-
 “ing the Channel; and that the Superintendants
 “of the Yards be requested to furnish Men and
 “Necessaries to navigate her down.

“*Resolved*, That another of the Fire Vessels
 “down in the Highlands be sent down to the same
 “Place.

“*Resolved*, That we have agreed to take up the
 “two Brigs lying here, and the two large Ships at
 “Esopus.

“It is the Advice and Opinion of Capt. Grenell,
 “that we dispatch the two Brigs to Fort Washing-
 “ton with such Men as may be had here, and that
 “such other Men as are more Skillful in Naviga-
 “tion, that we should take them to navigate the
 “two large Ships at Esopus.”

The next Meeting of the Committee was held
 at Poughkeepsie, September 25th, 1776, of which
 the following are the Minutes:

“At a Meeting of the Secret Committee: Present,
 “Robert Yates, Chn., Henry Wisner, Gilbert
 “Livingston, Robt. Harper.

“This Committee, pursuant to their Resolves
 “and in consequence of the Power vested in them
 “by the Convention of the State of New York,
 “have impressed for the Use of the Publick two

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 45

“new Ships, the Property of Messrs. Franklin,
“which were found near Esopus Landing—a
“Brig belonging to Messrs. Malcom, Kip and
“others, at Poughkeepsie Landing, and another
“Brig lying at Schenck’s Wharf, [probably Fish-
“kill] owned (as is said) by Lathrop and others in
“New England.

“And, in order that the Value of these Vessels
“respectively may be ascertained, so that the Own-
“ers may receive from the Publick a just and
“equitable Compensation,

“*Resolved*, That Austin Lawrence, Saml. Tudor,
“Thos. Grenell, Stephen Simmons, Lancaster Bur-
“ling, Thos. Ives and David Stoddard be appointed,
“and they, or a Majority of them, are hereby ap-
“pointed Appraisers for the Purpose of estimating
“the Value of those Vessels, together with their
“Apparel and Furniture.

“*Resolved*, further, That the said Appraisers,
“previous to their making such Appraisement, take
“the following Oath:

“You swear that you will, to the best of your
“Skill and Understanding, justly and impartially
“appraise the Value of the several and respective
“Vessels, their Tackle and Furniture above men-
“tioned.”

“And, *Resolved*, further, That the said Apprais-
“ers or a Majority of them, be requested, after
“such Appraisement is made, to reduce the same to
“Writing under their Hands, in order to furnish
“this Committee therewith.”

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Minutes of a Meeting on the 26th of September are among the Papers, but as the Proceedings have no direct Reference to either of the Obstructions, we have not copied them. On the 27th of September, the Appraisers submitted their Return. The Minutes are as follows:

“POUGHKEEPSIE, Sept. 27, 1776.

“At a Meeting of the Secret Committee: Present,

“Robt. Yates, Chn., Henry Wisner, Robt. Har-

“per, Jacob Cuyler.

“By the Return of the Appraisers it appears they
“have appraised

“The Brig of Lothrop and others, £400

“The Brig of Malcom and others, 760

“The Ship of John Franklin, 3429

“The Ship of Samuel Franklin, 2800

“Total, £7389

“*Resolved*, That Instructions be given to Capt.

“North for his Conduct in going to Fort Wash-
“ington.¹

¹ The following are the Instructions here referred to:

POUGHKEEPSIE, Sept. 27, 1776.

“Sir—You are to proceed with your Sloop down the River as far as Mount Washington—there to take Charge of what Tackle and Apparel may be on Board the two Ships, two Brigs, and two Sloops, sent down by this Committee, intended to be sunk there, if his Excellency Genl. Washington shall think it necessary. You will carefully take the Rigging, &c., of all the Vessels

on Board your Sloop, especially that belonging to the Ships, keeping it separate from the rest, or so marked that you will be able to distinguish it from what you may have on Board belonging to the other Vessels, and store the Same, on your Return, in Messrs. Schenck's Store, with the Rigging already there, belonging to the said Ships. You will also take Charge of the Boards and Plank on Board the Brig, belonging to Lothrop and others, sell them for the Market price, keep an exact

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 47

“*Resolved*, farther, That a Letter be sent to
“General Washington, acquainting him with our
“Proceedings.¹

“*Resolved*, That the several Persons appointed
“by this Committee for navigating the impressed
“Vessels from hence to Fort Washington, do sail
“from this Place immediately to the said Fort ;
“and all commanding Officers at the Forts and
“elsewhere on the River, in the Service of this
“State, are hereby ordered and requested to aid

Account of the Number and Sales, and return the Amount and Monies to Capt. John Schenck to be kept for the Owner of the Boards. You are to bring the Hands back (on Board your Sloop) which we have sent to navigate the Vessels down, if they don't find an earlier Passage—keeping Account of all your Expenses, &c. In case His Excellency conceives it Needful to sink any or the whole of the Vessels sent down you are to have them brought back as soon as possible, by the same Hands that carry them down, or such other as you can procure. When at either of the Forts in the Highlands or at Mount Washington you may apply to the Commanding Officer for an Order on the Commissary for as many Rations of Provisions as are necessary for your Hands and those in the other Vessels, being all in the Continental Service.”

“By Order,

“ROBT. YATES, Chairman.

“To Capt. Robert North.”

¹ The following is the original Draft of the Letter to Gen. Washington here referred to:

“POUGHKEEPSIE, Sept. 27, 1776.

SIR—In consequence of your Excellency's Requisition, the Committee, which the Convention of this State appointed for devising Ways and Means to obstruct the Navigation of Hudson's River, have lately received Directions from the Convention to purchase Vessels to be sunk near Fort Washington. To effect this we immediately proceeded up to this Place with Capt. Grenel, whose Assistance, by Reason of his naval Experience, the Convention conceived might be Useful to the Committee.

“The Committee, upon their Arrival here, sent down an old Sloop which we had purchased some Time before, and directed that another Sloop lying in the Highlands should also be sent down. Both are intended to be sunk, and we make no Doubt but by this Time they are at the Bridge. As

48 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

“ and assist in ballasting said Vessels, whenever they
 “ shall be called upon by any of the Skippers of the
 “ said Vessels for that Purpose.

“ A Copy of the above Resolve sent to Capt.
 “ Henry Benson for Ship; do. to Alexander Dean

also the Fire Ship charged by Capt. Hazelwood, he having charged but One here for want of Materials.

“ The Committee have also impressed and now send down two large Ships and two Brigs; and in Order to ascertain their respective Values have appointed Persons of unexceptionable Characters and great Experience to appraise the Same on Oath, for the Purpose that the Owners thereof may receive from the Public a Recompence. The said Appraisement stands as follows:

The Brig of Lothrop and others,	£400
The Brig of Malcom and others,	760
The new Ship of John Franklin,	3429
The new Ship of Samuel Franklin,	2800
	<hr/>
	£7389

The Fire Sloop was purchased for	200
The Sloop sent from Poughkeepsie,	125
The Sloop in the Highlands,	130
	<hr/>
	£7844

“ We found in the Brig owned by Mr. Lothrop a Quantity of Boards, and knowing they were much want-

ed at the Bridge, we concluded to send them down, and have requested Capt. North to deliver them to such Officer as may be appointed to receive and purchase the same, and at the Price usually paid, with Power to receive the Money.

“ The two Ships have never been out at Sea, and by the Report of Masters of Vessels and Ship Carpenters they are well built and of the very best Materials. It would, therefore, become a Matter of Concern to sink those Vessels, if the Interest of the Public should not render the Measure absolutely necessary and unavoidable.

“ In order to afford Capt. Cooke proper Assistance in procuring Plank we directed Capt. Casewell, of the Sloop-of-War Cambden, equipped by this State, to carry down all the spare Plank in the Ship-yards. We have also purchased upwards of 6000 Feet and sent them down by Capt. Donaldson; and as those Sloops proceeded down with a fair Wind on Tuesday last we make no doubt but they are safely arrived.

“ Yr humble Servt.

“ ROBT. YATES, Chairman.

“ To His Excellency, Genl. Washington.”

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 49

“for the other lesser Ship; do. to Mr. Lewes for a
“Brig; do. to Capt. Hallock for a Brig.”

The Letter from Robt. Yates, Chairman of the Secret Committee, to the Convention,¹ shows that the Vessels in question were sent to Fort Washington. The Fire Vessels sent down by the Secret Committee do not seem to have been of any use whatever. The Plank and Boards sent down were used—the first for the Construction of

¹ The following is the Original Draft of this Letter:

“POUGHKEEPSIE, Wednesday, }
25th Sept., 1776. }

“Sir: We’ve obtained 2 Sloops, 2 Briggs, and 2 large Ships for the Purpose of obstructing the Channel at Fort Washington. One of the Sloops, the Clinton, heretofore purchased by the Committee, we found here, the other we’ve ordered from Fort Montgomery. The two Briggs are here also, one of them belongs to Malcom, Kip & Lott, the other, a New England Brig about 120 tons Burthen, loaded with Wheat, Staves, and a considerable Quantity of inch Plank—the Wheat and Staves we’ve ordered to be stored, but keep the Boards for public Use. The Ships are in Esopus Creek, owner Messrs. Franklin. They are two very fine Vessels, in the building of which much extraordinary Pains have been taken, both as to Timber and Workmanship. Upon going there we ordered them to be hauled out, and expect they will proceed to Fort

Washington this Day. The 2 Sloops, the Clinton and that from Fort Montgomery, we think are almost arrived at this Time, as the Clinton sailed yesterday with a fair Wind and the other must have proceeded from the Fort after the Clinton arrived there; and as to the Briggs we hope we shall be able to dispatch them to-day also. The Cambden, Capt. Castle, with near 2000 Feet of Plank and Capt. Donaldson with upwards of 6000 do. sailed yesterday also. The Ships and Briggs aforesaid we are to have appraised by the Time they are ready to set off from here; and we imagine the Ships will run very high.

“Our Stock of Money is very low, and our Contracts and Expenses far exceeding the Sum we were furnished with—the Demands on this Committee frequent and urgent. Upon these Considerations we hope the Convention will by some Means or other furnish us with a farther Supply.”

Platforms in the Fort, and the latter in completing the Bridge across the Spuyten-Devil Creek. The Ships and Brigs were received by Capt. Cook.

The Minutes of the Secret Committee make no further mention of the Fort Washington Obstructions. As we have before remarked, the Obstructions at that Place appear to have been, entirely, under the Charge of others. From what we can gather, Tench Tilghman, Capt. Cook and the Commandant at Fort Washington, managed the whole Affair, receiving only the Assistance of the Secret Committee in the Vessels sent. This is apparent from the following Letter from Tench Tilghman, dated October 3d, 1776 :

“Capt. Cook is now up the River cutting Timber for the *Chevaux-de-Frise* ; as he is much wanted here to sink the old Vessels, the Gen. begs that you would immediately send him down ; we are at a Stand for want of him, for as he has Superintended the Matter from the beginning, he best knows the properest places to be Obstructed.”

The haste with which the Obstructions were completed supplies the Inference that they were far from Perfect. Indeed, they failed entirely of their Purpose, as the Enemy's Vessels passed them, on the 9th of October, without firing a Gun, as will be seen from the following Letter to the Convention :

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 51

“ HEAD QUARTERS, }
“ Harlem Heights, 9th Oct., 1776. }

“ GENTLEMEN :

“ About 8 o’Clock this Morning the Roebuck
“ and Phœnix, and a Frigate of about 20 Guns, got
“ under way from about Bloomingdale, where
“ they have been laying for some Time, and Steer-
“ ed on with an easy Southerly Breeze towards our
“ *Chevaux-de-Frise*, which we hoped would have
“ given them some Interruption, while our Batte-
“ ries played upon them; but to our Surprise and
“ Mortification, they all ran through without the
“ least Difficulty, and without receiving the least
“ apparent Damage. How far they intend to go
“ up, I don’t know; but His Excellency thought
“ fit to give you the earliest Information, that you
“ may put Gen. Clinton on his Guard at the
“ Highlands; for they may have Troops on Board
“ to surprise those Forts. If you have any Stores
“ on the Water side, you had better have them re-
“ moved a Second Time;¹ Boards especially, for

¹ It may be proper to explain the Words, “ a Second Time,” here used. On the 12th of July, 1776, before the Obstructions at Fort Washington were in any considerable State of Forwardness, two British Vessels of War, the Phoenix and the Rose, Sailed up the River as far as Haverstraw. Expresses were immediately sent to the Convention informing that Body of the Fact, and to Gen. Clinton, then in

Command at Fort Montgomery. Among the old Papers deposited in Washington’s Head Quarters in Newburgh, is the following Letter to Gen. Clinton :

“ HEAD QUARTERS, }
“ July 12th, 1776. }

“ SIR :

“ This is just to inform you,
“ that two Men-of-War have this
“ Afternoon passed by our Forts,
“ and gone up the River past Kings

“ which we shall be put to great Straits if the
 “ Communication is cut off. The Enemy have
 “ made no Move on the Land side.

“ I am, Gent., your most Obedt. Serv’t.,

“ TENCH TILGHMAN.

“ Hon. Convention of New York.”

This Intelligence was received with great Consternation. Surrounded by Tories, who took courage at the Success of the British Vessels, and

“ Bridge. You will therefore take
 “ such Measures as to put the Forts
 “ under your Command in the best
 “ State of Defence possible to Annoy the Enemy. You are also to
 “ Dispatch Expresses along the
 “ River that no Vessels may fall in
 “ their Hands, and to give Notice
 “ of this Manœuvre to the Commanding Officer at Albany, with
 “ all Expedition possible.

“ By Command of

“ His Excel. Gen. Washington,

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your very Servant,

“ RICH’D CAREY, Junr.,

“ A. D. C.”

“ P. S. I have it in Command
 “ farther to desire you would take
 “ the Carpenters from the Vessels
 “ which are Building at Pough-
 “ keepsie, and Prepare those Vessels
 “ which were taken from the
 “ Tories, and are now at Esopus,
 “ Kingston, to be made use of as Fire
 “ Rafts, or to make Rafts in any
 “ other way Expeditionously, that
 “ will Answer the purpose of Har-

“assing the Ships which are gone
 “ up the River.

“ I am as above,

“ R. CAREY, A. D. C.”

“ FORT CONSTITUTION, }

“ July 13, 1777. }

“ The above is a Copy of a
 “ Letter, I just now Rec’d by Ex-
 “ presses from the General.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your Humble Servant.

“ JAMES CLINTON, Col.”

The Convention immediately ordered out the Militia, and directed the Removal “ of all Provisions and other Stores,” both Private and Publick Property, to places of Safety. The Vessels, however, made no Attempt to pass the Highlands, but after supplying the Tories with Arms and Ammunition, returned to New York. No farther Effort was made to ascend the River until the Time of the Passage of the Obstructions.

The Attack of the Fire Ships on the Rose and Phoenix has already been noticed. (See *ante*, p. 24.)

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 53

having to Rely only upon the half completed Fortifications in the Highlands, and the few Militia Men who remained true to the Declaration (but who refused to March out of their Respective Counties), the Defence of the State appeared Hopeless and the Success of the Enemy Certain. But notwithstanding the discouraging Prospect, the Convention determined to leave nothing undone that could be done. An Express was dispatched to Gens. Clinton and Schuyler, then in Command of Forts Montgomery and Clinton; the Militia were ordered out to protect the Shores; and a Company of Rangers was sent to Fishkill for the "Purpose of detecting and suppressing Conspiracies formed in this State against the Liberties of "America." The following Letter, addressed by the Committee of Safety¹ to Gen. Washington Reveals the State of Affairs :

" FISHKILL, 10th October, 1776.

" SIR :

" We received from Mr. Tilghman an account
" of the Enemy's Ships having gone up the River,
" and have Despatched Expresses to Gen. Schuy-
" ler and Gen. Clinton, agreeable to Your Excel-
" lency's Request. Nothing can be more alarming
" than the present Situation of our State. We are
" Daily getting the most Authentic Intelligence of

¹ This Committee of Safety was appointed by the Convention, to act in its behalf, during the Periods when the Latter was not in Session.

“ Bodies of Men Enlisted and Armed, with orders
“ to assist the Enemy. We much fear that those
“ co-operating with the Enemy will seize such
“ Passes as will cut off all Communication between
“ the Army and us, and prevent your Supplies.

“ We dare not Trust any more of the Militia
“ out of this County. We have called for some
“ Aid from the two adjoining ones, but beg Leave
“ to suggest to Your Excellency the Propriety of
“ sending a Body of Men to the Highlands or
“ Peekskill to secure the Passes, prevent Insurrec-
“ tions and overaw the Disaffected.

“ We suppose Your Excellency has taken the
“ necessary Steps to prevent the Landing of any
“ Men from the Ships, should they be so inclined,
“ as no Reliance at all can be placed on the Militia
“ of Westchester County.”

Fortunately, however, the Vessels proceeded but a short Distance up the River; Quiet was soon restored, and redoubled Exertions made to complete the Fortifications and Obstructions at Fort Montgomery.

Two Vessels only of those furnished by the Secret Committee seem to have been used; the others were procured at New York. The Ships and Brigs sent down by the Secret Committee were evidently not used for that Purpose, as will be inferred from the following Correspondence, which bears Date after the Passage of the Obstructions by the Roebuck and Phoenix, viz :

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 55

“ HEAD QUARTERS, Oct. 11th, 1776.

“ SIR :

“ The General desires that you will Appoint
“ some Person on behalf of the Country to take
“ Charge of the two Ships and two Brigs that
“ were sent down here to be sunk.

“ I am, Sir, your Humble Servant,

“ WILLIAM GRAYSON, A. D. C.

“ To Brig. Gen. Mifflin.”

“ Capt. Cook is hereby authorized to take
“ charge of the Ships above referred to and give a
“ Receipt for the Ships and Tackle.

“ THOMAS MIFFLIN, B. G.

“ October 11, 1776.”

“ Received from Capt. Henry Benson, two
“ Ships and two Brigs, with the Materials herein-
“ after mentioned, being Vessels Ordered by the
“ Convention of the State of New York to this
“ Place for the stopping the Channel of the North
“ River, opposite to Mount Washington. [Here
follows an Inventory of the Rigging, &c.]

“ By Order of Brig. Gen. Mifflin,

“ MATHEW COOK.

“ Spiten-Devil Creek, 12 Oct., 1776.”

We have only one more Point to note. Immediately upon the Receipt of the Intelligence of the Passage of the British Vessels up the River, the Continental Congress passed an order directing

Gen. Washington, “ by every Art and at whatever
 “ Expense, to obstruct effectually the Navigation
 “ of North River, between Fort Washington and
 “ Mount Constitution, as well to prevent the Re-
 “ grefs of the Enemy’s Frigates lately gone up, as
 “ to hinder them from receiving Succor.” But
 the Reduction of Fort Washington and the Eva-
 cuation of Fort Lee (Mount Constitution) followed
 fo immediately after, as to prevent any Attempt at
 the Execution of this Order.

The Reduction of Fort Washington occurred
 on the 16th of November, 1776; and was an-
 nounced to the Convention of the State of New
 York by Gen. Washington, in a Letter bearing
 that Date, as follows :

“ I am Sorry to inform you that this Day about
 “ 12 o’Clock, the Enemy made a general Attack
 “ upon our Lines about Fort Washington, which
 “ having carried, the Garrison retired within the
 “ Fort. Col. McGraw finding there was no Prof-
 “ pect of Retreating acrofs the North River, fur-
 “ rendered the Post. We do not know our own
 “ lofs, or that of the Enemy in forcing the Lines,
 “ but I imagine it muft have been pretty consider-
 “ able on both fides, as the Fire in some Parts was
 “ of long continuance and heavy; neither do I
 “ know the Terms of Capitulation. The Force of
 “ the Garrison before the Attack was about 2000
 “ Men. I have the Honor to be, &c.,

“ GEO. WASHINGTON.”

Chevaux-de-Frise at Ft. Washington. 57

In a Note to his Account of the Reduction of Fort Washington, Loffing says: "The Number
"of Regulars was about two thousand. There
"were six or seven hundred Militia, Volunteers
"and Stragglers, all of whom were probably in-
"cluded in Howe's Report of 'two thousand six
"hundred Prisoners.' The loss of the Americans,
"in killed and wounded, did not exceed one
"hundred; that of the Royal Army was almost
"one thousand. The Hessians, as usual, Suffered
"most severely."

Upon obtaining Possession of Fort Washington, the British removed the Obstructions at that Place, and Demolished entirely Fort Lee.

III.

O B S T R U C T I O N S

AT

FORT MONTGOMERY.



THE
O B S T R U C T I O N S
A T
FORT MONTGOMERY.



HE Obstructions to the Navigation of the River at Fort Montgomery, were constructed entirely by or under the Direction of the Secret Committee. In the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee, and in the Letters and other Documents furnished us in the Clinton Papers, we have: 1st. The different Plans that were proposed, commenced and abandoned; 2d. The Plan finally adopted, and an Account of the Difficulties that attended its Execution; 3d. *The precise Character of the Obstructions when completed*; 4th. The failure that attended the

first Efforts to fix the Chain; and the subsequent Success.

Noticing these Points briefly, we remark, 1st. The Minutes show that the Committee first agreed to Obstruct the Navigation by means of a Boom, which was to be constructed in the Manner described in the following Extract. "It was

"Directed that Rafts were to be made, formed of

"Pine Logs of

"not less than

"fifty feet long,

"placed ten feet



"apart, and framed together by three cross Pieces;

"that each Raft be placed fifteen feet apart

"and Connected by strong Chains of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch

"Iron; that the Rafts be anchored with their

"Butts down the River; that the Butts be

"armed with Iron." (*See Minutes of July 19th,*

and August 1st). In Front of the Boom thus

constructed were to be placed Frames of Timber

made in the following Manner: "The pointed

"Beams to be of about the length of 16 feet, and

"to be about 15 foot apart and two Cross Beams

"worked in and Bolted; * * the Points or Ends

"whereof to be shod with Iron, so as to Answer

"the double purpose of Pounding any Vessels that

"may Sail up to it; and if that should fail, to les-

"sen the Shock of those Vessels when they come to

"the Boom." (*See Minutes of July 19th*). Es-

pecial Attention is asked to this Description, from

Chain, &c., at Fort Montgomery. 63

the Fact that it has been stated that the Chain was placed in Front of the Boom, not only at Fort Montgomery, but also at West Point. The fact was exactly the reverse, and was so, not only for the Reasons assigned by the Committee, viz: "To receive the first shock of those Vessels that may come up to it," and thus relieve the Boom or Main Obstruction; but from the obvious Fact that it would be a gross Absurdity to place the principal Obstruction in a Position rendering it liable to be broken and its Purpose defeated by the first Onset of the Enemy. Obstructions to River Navigation should be constructed on precisely the same Principle as is a Fortification, whose Out-works are advanced to receive the first Assault.

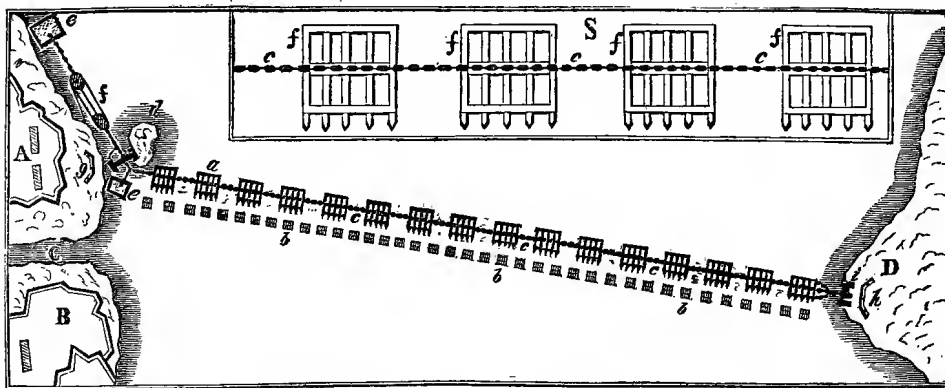
2d. That the Plan of Obstructing the River by Caissons was proposed by Gen. Philip Schuyler.

3d. That after adopting the Plan first referred to, the Committee reconsidered their Action, and abandoned it, resolving to construct a Chain instead of a Boom. That this Plan was, in turn, temporarily abandoned, and the Construction of the Boom resumed. And finally, that the Boom again gave place to the Chain; a large Portion of the latter having been previously used in Obstructing the Navigation of the River Sorel, the Outlet to Lake Champlain.

4th. That the Obstructions, when completed, consisted of a *Chain floated by Spars framed to-*

gether;¹ and that in Front of the Chain were anchored the Frames of Timber last described in the Minutes of July 1st.

The following Engraving, which is copied from the original Map of the Position of the Chain, found among the Papers of the Secret Committee, shows the Manner in which it was secured to the Shores; how it was floated on the Surface of the Water, and the Position of the Booms; for so we must



- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| A Fort Montgomery. | B Fort Clinton. | C Poplopin's Kill. | D Anthony's Nose. |
| a Floats to Chain. | b b b Booms in front of Chain. | c c c Chain. | e e Cribs and Anchors. |
| d Rock at which the Chain was secured with large Iron Roller. | f Blocks and Purchase for tightening Chain. | g h Ground Batteries for defence of Chain. | |
| S Section showing Floats and Chain. | c c c Chain. | f f f Floats. | |

regard the Frame of Timber placed in Front of it for its Protection:

With this Explanation of the Subject, we resume the History of the Obstructions. From the

¹ It is probable that a Portion of Boom were used for this Purpose. the Frames previously made for the

Chain, &c., at Fort Montgomery. 65

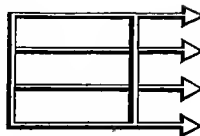
Papers referred to, we learn that the Members of the Secret Committee, immediately on their Appointment, proceeded to the Highlands, for the purpose of ascertaining the Condition of the Forts there; and to determine, by a Survey, the Character of the Obstructions necessary, in order to close the River against the Passage of the Enemy's Vessels. The first Meeting of the Committee was held on the 19th of July, when the following were the Proceedings:

“ FORT MONTGOMERY, July 19, 1776.

“ At a Meeting of the Secret Committee from the
“ Convention of the State of New York: Pre-
“ sent—Messrs. Jay, Yates, R. R. Livingston,
“ G. Livingston, and Tappan, Committee, and
“ Gen. Jas. Clinton, Col. Geo. Clinton, and
“ Capt. Bedlow.

“ It is proposed and agreed to, that in order to
“ Obstruct the Navigation of the Hudson's River
“ so as to prevent any of the Ships of the King of
“ Great Britain coming up the same, it will be
“ necessary to throw across the River at or near
“ Fort Montgomery, a Boom, and below it to
“ Anchor Frames of Timber, the Points or Ends
“ whereof to be shod with Iron, so as to answer
“ the double purpose of Pounding any Ships that
“ may Sail up to it; and if that should fail, to less-
“ sen the shock of those Vessels when they come to
“ the Boom—such Frames to be made in the

“ following Manner : The pointed
 “ Beams to be of about the length
 “ of 16 feet, and to be about 15 foot
 “ apart and two cross Beams worked
 “ in and Bolted.”



Under date of July 20th, we find the following minutes :

“ July 20th.

“ Agreed to have 200 Iron Trucks cast at the
 “ Furnace in the Highlands—and gave orders to
 “ Mr. Boyd to have Moulds made for the Pur-
 “ pose.

“ Also wrote a Letter to General Washington,
 “ apprising him of our Proceedings and requesting
 “ him to send to the Forts in the Highlands a
 “ number of Artillery Men.¹

¹ The Following is the original
 Draft of this Letter :

“ FORT WASHINGTON, }
 20 July, 1776. }

SIR—We informed your Ex-
 cellency of our Appointment, and
 in Consequence of which we took
 a Survey of the Fortrefs in the
 Highlands. We are extremely sorry
 to say, that notwithstanding their
 Importance and advantageous Situa-
 tion, they are by no Means in a
 proper Posture of Defence. Part
 of the few Cannon at Fort Consti-
 tution were sent away, and the
 whole Number now there and at
 Fort Montgomery are not sufficient.
 This Want we suppose your Excel-

lency will be unable to Supply.
 We have therefore sent for those
 that were designed for the Ships
 that are building at Poughkeepsie ;
 but if we should obtain them they
 will be of little Use unless some
Matrosses can be spared from New
 York since there are only 14 at both
 Forts. If your Excellency could
 spare a few Howitzers they might
 be of signal Use at this Place. A
 skillful Engineer would be at no
 Place more Serviceable than here,
 as many small Posts which command
 this ought to be Fortified. We
 cannot think the Garrisons by any
 Means proportioned to the Extent
 of the Works or the Importance of

Chain, &c., at Fort Montgomery. 67

“Also, wrote a Letter to the Proprietors of the
“Iron Furnace at Salisbury requesting them to
“send to the landing of Col. Hoffman, all 20 of
“the heavy Cannon they may have cast, for the
“use of the Shipping at Poughkeepsie.

“Also, wrote a Letter to the Convention ap-
“prising them of our Proceedings.”¹

The next Meeting of the Committee was held

the Place. We know the Difficulty that your Excellency will find in supplying these Wants, yet we can not but suggest them, since we are satisfied that even if the Enemy should be Defeated at New York they may yet take such Posts here as we should find it Impossible to Dispossess them of.

“Since writing the Above we have been informed that the Salisbury Furnace, at which Place the Cannon are cast, is under the Direction of the Government of Connecticut, so that we have some Doubt whether we can procure those for which we wrote unless your Excellency be pleased to lend us your Assistance by writing to Gov. Trumbel on the Subject.

ROBT. YATES, Chn. of Com.

¹ The following is the Draft of the Letter to the Convention:

“FORT MONTGOMERY, }
“July 21, 1776. }

“GENTLN.—In Consequence of a late Resolution of the Convention of this State we are appointed a Secret Committee to devise Ways

and Means for obstructing the Channel of Hudson's River. We have determined to throw a Boom across the River in order to prevent the Enemy's Ships from passing the Forts in the Highlands, and for this Purpose we shall want 150 White Pine Logs, or any other Wood that will float, of the Length of 14 feet.¹ You will, therefore, please to procure them, and send them to Poughkeepsie to Messrs. Van Zandt, Tudor and Lawrence with the utmost Dispatch. As two Ships are already advanced as far as Haverstraw, and only wait for a favorable Opportunity to pass the Fortifications, the Necessity of a Boom is rendered exceedingly pressing. We trust, therefore, that you will exert yourselves upon this Occasion and send the Logs as fast as they can be procured. You will be immediately furnished with Monie by one of our monied Members who leaves this Place for Albany to-morrow.

“We are, Gentlemen, &c.”

¹ These Logs were subsequently rafted to New Windsor and used in constructing the Boom at West Point.

68 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

July 25th, 1776. The following were the Proceedings:

“POUGHKEEPSIE, July 25th, 1776.

“Present—The Committee as before.

“It is Proposed and Agreed to, that a Boom be drawn across the Hudson’s River at the High-lands. That an Express be sent Gen. Schuyler¹

¹The following is the original Draft of the Letter to Gen. Schuyler. It is without date—as follows:

“SIR—The enclosed Copy of some late Resolutions of the Convention of the State of New York will inform you, that we are a Committee of that Body and charged with the Execution of the Business mentioned in them.

“As the Chain intended to Obstruct the River Sorel cannot now be applied to that Use, and will Serve to prevent the Enemy’s Ships from going beyond the Hook on Hudson’s River, we must beg the Favor of you to send it (the whole or such Parts of it as may expeditiously be had) to Poughkeepsie, and Configned to Messrs. Van Zante, Lawrence and Tudor, with the utmost Dispatch.

“Be pleased to inform those Gentlemen of the length of such Part of the Chain as you can send, in order that they may direct the deficiency to be Supplied.

“We shall, by this Opportunity, request of the Committee of Albany immediately to furnish us with 150 saw Logs of the largest size to sup-

port the Chain; and we flatter ourselves that your Attention and Influence will be extended to both these Objects.

“We have the honor be, Sir, with the greatest esteem and respect,

“Your most obedient

“And hble. servt.”

To this Letter, Gen. Schuyler sent the following Reply:

“GERMAN FLATS, }
“July 25th, 1776. }

“GENTLEMEN—Your Letter of the 20th Inst., from Poughkeepsie, was delivered to me at nine this Morning. I have transmitted a Copy of it, and of the Resolution it inclosed, to General Gates, with directions to send the Chain to you, under the Charge of a careful Officer, *if it can be spared*. Before I left Tyconderoga, we had it in Contemplation to Draw it across that Part of Lake Champlain which Divides Tyconderoga from the Camp we occupy on the East Shore opposite to it. I would not wish you, therefore to make too great a dependence upon receiving it. If it cannot be spared, Messrs. Van

Chain, &c., at Fort Montgomery. 69

“ for the Chain intended to be thrown across the
“ River Sorrel, to be employed for the above pur-
“ pose; and as it may fall short of the Distance
“ required, it is farther concluded to Apply to Col.
“ R. Livingston to make until countermanded by
“ this Committee, a quantity of Bar-Iron of about
“ $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square, and to be sent from Time to
“ Time to the Works at Poughkeepsie.”

On the Margin of the Minutes of this Meeting
is the following Memoranda :

Zant, Lawrence and Tudor will be
Advised of it without delay.

“ Whether the Chain is sent or
not, you may stand in need of the
saw Logs. For perhaps, you will
think it Expedient, if the Chain
cannot be procured, to sink Caskons
or Sloops filled with Stone and sunk
in the River from *Tan-canten-hook*
to the Eastern Shore, to stop the
Passage. Part of the Channel there
is so shallow that I was once on
Board of a Sloop deeply laden
which touched at low Water. And
that in any part where the Channel
there is too deep, two Caskons or
Vessels, one upon the other, would
answer the Purpose. A Passage
might be left open in the shallowest
part, and one or more Vessels
ready for sinking kept at Hand.
This Place is indeed above Fort
Montgomery, but the Enemy
would find it extremely Difficult to
Force a Passage through the High-
lands if a Body of Troops well in-

trenched were opposed to them at
the narrow Passage just beyond the
first House in the Highlands, and
between that and where Teller
formerly lived. This may have
occurred to you; and perhaps there
are Difficulties which I am unac-
quainted. I have ventured to men-
tion this, well knowing that my
Motives will be a sufficient Apology
with you for the Liberty I have
taken in doing so.

“ I am, Gentlemen,

“ Your most obedt.

“ And humbl. Servt.,

“ PH. SCHUYLER.”

“ To ROBT. YATES, Esq., Chair-
man, and the rest of the Gentle-
men of the Secret Committee, &c.”

This Reply to Gen. Schuyler is
a curious Affair. The Suggestions
which he makes evidently refer to
the sinking of Caskons near Pollo-
pel's Island—but we have been un-
able to locate Tancanten Hook.

“For 600 yds., or 1800 feet of Chain, you
“want 4800 foot of Bar Iron in length.”

At this Meeting Artizans were appointed to
construct the Works agreed upon; and the follow-
ing Instructions issued to them:

“The Convention of the State of New York,
“having, by a Resolution of the 16th Day of July
“Instant appointed us a Committee, among other
“things to devise Means for Fortifying Hudson’s
“River, and Obstructing its Navigation; and for
“carrying the same into Execution, we have
“thought it necessary to appoint, and do hereby
“appoint Jacobus Van Zante, Augustus Lawrence
“and Samuel Tudor, or any two of them, to
“Superintend the following Work (under the Di-
“rection of such of the Members of this Com-
“mittee as may remain or be at Poughkeepsie):

“1st. The making of a Chain to fix across
“Hudson’s River at the most convenient place
“near Fort Montgomery, and fixing the same;
“and if it should be found Impracticable at or near
“the said Fort, then to fix the same at or near Fort
“Constitution. * * * * *

“If it should happen that none of this Com-
“mittee should be at Poughkeepsie, in that case
“the said Van Zandt, Lawrence and Tudor are
“directed to inform the Chairmain of this Com-
“mittee, or any of the Members, of the Measures
“they have taken in consequence of this appoint-

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“ment. And we hereby engage, for and in behalf of the State of New York, to Defray the Expense attending the Execution of this Work, as well as to make to the said Van Zandt, Lawrence and Tudor a reasonable allowance for their trouble.”

By these Instructions, it will be seen that the original Design was changed. Instead of a *Boom*, the Artizans named were directed to make and fix a *Chain* across the Hudson's River,” &c.

And here we remark, that the Distinction made by the Secret Committee, between a Boom and a Chain, should be particularly observed. In many Instances, and especially in English Histories, the whole Obstruction was spoken of as a Boom, not only in reference to that at Fort Montgomery but also that at West Point. Strictly speaking, this would, perhaps, be a correct Designation; but the Secret Committee applied the terms *Boom* and *Chain* to specify different Parts of the Work, instead of employing them convertibly. This Distinction was observed, not only in the Fort Montgomery Obstructions, but also in constructing those at West Point; and in this Sense we use the terms—that is, as specifying separate Parts of the Obstructions. Hence we have said that there was a Boom and a Chain at Fort Montgomery, and a Boom and a Chain at West Point, when the Obstructions at those Points were severally completed.

A Meeting of the Committee was held at Albany, July 27, 1776, but the Minutes are entirely illegible. The next Meeting of the Committee was held on the 1st Aug., 1776—Present, G. Livingston, Robert R. Livingston, and William Paulding. At this Meeting the Committee seem to have regarded it as impossible to get the Chain constructed in Time to be of any Service, and passed a Resolution returning to the Plan adopted at their first Meeting (July 16), as will be seen from the following :

“*Resolved*, That it appears to the Members of
 “ this Committee, that the Chain intended for the
 “ River Sorel, will, in all probability, be retained at
 “ Ticonderoga; that the making one of sufficient
 “ Length will occasion great Delay; that the Rafts
 “ heretofore agreed upon by this Committee, at
 “ the Meeting held at Fort Montgomery, and laid
 “ aside on Account of the Difficulty of procuring
 “ the necessary Spars, will be the most effectual and
 “ speedy Means of obstructing the Navigation of
 “ the River; that it appears to this Committee,
 “ that the Wood necessary for forming the Rafts
 “ may be procured, a Contract having been made
 “ for the same by Mr. Tappen, with the Approba-
 “ tion of Robt. Yates, Esq., and Mr. R. Livingston.

¹The following is the Contract “ and signified by Letter of Mr. R.
 here referred to : “ Livingston, respecting the Deli-

“(Copy.) I agree to the pro- “ very of 160 Spars of 50 (feet)
 “ posals made to me by Mr. White “ long in Hudson’s River on the

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“*Resolved*, Therefore, that Mr. Jacobus Van
 “Zandt, Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Tudor be direct-
 “ed to form the Rafts agreeable to the following
 “Plan: That each Raft be formed of five Logs
 “of not less than fifty feet in length, placed ten
 “feet apart, and framed together by three cross
 “Pieces; that each Raft be placed fifteen feet
 “apart and Connected by strong Chains of $1\frac{1}{2}$
 “inch thick, and anchored with their Butts down
 “the River; that the Butts be shod with iron.

“That each Member of this Committee be
 “directed to Enquire for and Purchase as many

“last Day of next Week; for
 “which, if Mr. Robt. R. Living-
 “ston and Robt. Yates agree to, I
 “think they reasonably deserve the
 “Sum of £1000.

“Signed,

“CHRISTOPHER TAPPEN.

“July 26th, 1776.”

The following is the Bill for these
 Logs:

“POUGHKEEPSIE, }
 “Sept. 15th, 1776. }

“The Honorable Convention of
 “the State of New York.

“To John R. Livingston & White,
 Dr.

“For 160 large Trees, as per
 “Contract made with your Secret
 “Convention, £1000”

Here is another Bill for Logs—
 which seem to be those referred to
 in the Letter to the Convention
 (note 2) and by Gen. Schuyler in
 his Letter to the Committee, viz:

“The Committee of the Con-
 “vention of the State of New York.

“To Robt. Van Rensselaer, Dr.

“To 111 Pieces of Timber of 45
 “feet and upwards in length, at
 “50 per Piece, . . . £277 0 0

“To 55 Trees cut and
 “by agreement with

“the Proprietors I
 “was to Pay at the

“Rate of 40s per
 “Tree, but before

“the removal there-
 “of my Orders

“were counter-
 “mandated, 11 0 0

“To rafting the Tim-
 “ber from Outh-

“out's to Albany, . . . 7 0 0

£275 10 0

“Albany, Augst 5th, 1776.

“Received of Robt. Yates on
 acct. £114 10 0.”

“Anchors and Cables as they can procure and
 “send Word to this Committee by the 7th Day
 “of this Month of the Number they can obtain.

“*Resolved*, That it appears to this Committee
 “that Robt. R. Livingston ought to go down to
 “New York and remain with the General in order
 “to give him all the Assistance in his Power in
 “forwarding such Operations as His Excellency
 “may have formed for the Defence of this State;
 “and that for that Purpose Mr. Livingston be
 “vested with all the Powers of this Committee so
 “far as he may deem it necessary to exert the
 “same.

“In case it shall appear to Mr. Livingston un-
 “necessary for him to remain in New York, that
 “he can return to this place.”

It does not appear, however, that this Plan was carried out, farther than by procuring the necessary Logs, as the Construction of the Chain was still continued and was evidently subsequently placed across the River. The $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch Iron ordered for the Chains mentioned in the Resolutions was Worked up into Chain to strengthen the large Chain (*Minutes Oct. 9*); and of the Logs, a Part was probably used for the Floats to the Chain, and another Part rafted to New-Windsor for the *Chevaux-de-Frise* at Pollopel's Island.

The next Meeting of the Convention was held on the 13th August, of which the following are the Minutes:

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“ Poughkeepsie. At a Meeting of the Secret Committee of the Convention of New York, Aug. 13th, 1776. Present—Robt. Yates, Chn., John Jay, Gilbert Livingston, Christ. Tappen. Read a Letter from Gen. Washington of the 21st ult. Mr. Jay delivered in a Report of his Proceedings in Connecticut and elsewhere, which was read and approved of.¹ Mr. Jay, according to Order, also produced a Draft of a Letter to his Excellency Gen. Washington, which was read and approved of, and ordered to be engrossed.² Also, a Draft of another Letter to the Convention of New York, which was also read and approved of, and ordered to be engrossed. The Smiths, to wit: Messrs. George Smart, Isaac Van Duzen, Theop. Anthony and James Odill waited on the Committee in order to inform them at what Rate they would undertake to make Bolts for the Floats to the Chain. They offered to make them at the Rate of 32s per cwt.

“ *Resolved*, That there be allowed to Mr. Isaac Sheldon the Sum of twenty-five dollars for his Services in going up to Albany and assisting the Committee in procuring the Materials for the

¹ This Document is among the Clinton Papers with the necessary Passes for its transmission to Albany. Why it was never forwarded is a Mystery. It refers mainly to pro-

curing Cannon, &c., for the Forts in the Highlands.

² This Letter to Gen. Washington was for a Supply of Powder for armed Vessels.

“Defense of Hudson’s River, and attending at
 “Poughkeepsie from the 23d of July last to the
 “present Day. And ordered that Mr. G. Living-
 “ston Pay him or his Order the above Sum.

“Received a Letter from R. Livingston to John
 “Jay, Esq., dated the 12th Aug., 1776, acquaint-
 “ing him that he cannot complete the Trucks for
 “want of proper Hands to Mould them. Also,
 “received another Letter from the same Person,
 “dated the 11th Inst., directed to G. Livingston,
 “acquainting him that 2 tons of Iron was carried
 “down to his Landing, and that three tons would
 “be ready on Tuesday next, and on Saturday next
 “5 tons more, and requests him to send a Vessel
 “for it.

“P. M. *Resolved*, That the Messrs. G. Living-
 “ston and Christopher Tappen pay into the Hands
 “of the Commissioners and Superintendents of the
 “Ship-Yards at Poughkeepsie the Sum of three
 “hundred pounds, on Account of Expenses in-
 “curred or to be incurred by the Execution of the
 “Orders which they have or may receive from this
 “Committee.

“Agreed to give an order in favor of Dirk
 “Schuyler for £15 for bringing the *Chain* and
 “some Pine Knots from Albany.”

The only point of special Interest in these Pro-
 ceedings is that in reference to bringing the *Chain*
 down from Albany. This Chain must have been

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that intended for the River Sorel, for which application had been made to Gen. Schuyler. The next Meeting was held Aug. 14th, and was confined to making Arrangements for Supplies of Provisions, Powder, Men, &c., for the Vessels of War fitting out at Poughkeepsie. The following Resolution was passed.

“ It being necessary that Messrs. Yates and Jay should for some Time be absent from the Committee,

“ *Resolved*, That such of the Members less than a Quorum as may be present at Poughkeepsie, have power to Execute all the Resolutions of this Committee which they have already made; that they consult with Capt. Hazelwood on the best Means of fixing the Chain, and cause it to be done in such Manner as to them shall appear best calculated to Answer the purpose it is designed for.”

The Minutes of the Meetings held on the 22d, 23d, 25th and 27th of September we have given in connection with the Obstructions at Fort Washington, to which they refer. At the Meeting of the 27th September, however, vigorous Efforts seem to have been made to complete the Chain, as appears from the following Resolutions:

“ *Resolved*, That the several Blacksmiths employed in the Continental Service in the Ship

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“Yards at Poughkeepsie, (pursuant to a Resolve
“of the Congress at Philadelphia), be ordered and
“requested, and they are hereby ordered and re-
“quested, to proceed with all possible Expedition
“in making and completing the Chain which has
“been ordered to be made by this Committee, and
“that they severally desist from any other Business
“until they have completed the said Chain as soon
“as furnished with Iron.

“*Resolved*, That Messrs. Smart, Van Deusen,
“Anthony and Odel, or either of them are hereby
“impowered to impress Wagons and Teams to
“draw Coal, paying the usual Price of the Country;
“likewise, to impress Coal at the usual Price for
“Coal; they paying for the same; that the Public
“Business may not be retarded.

“*Resolved*, That Gilbert Livingston pay Messrs.
“Franklin & Spifford one hundred and twelve
“pounds fifteen shillings for two Hogsheds of
“Rum purchased of them by this Committee.”¹

The next Meeting of the Committee was held
Oct. 9th. The following are the Minutes:

¹The following is the Bill of
Franklin & Spifford;

223 18
18

“POCEPSEY, 27th Septmr. 1776.

“The Secret Committy of the Con-
vention of N. York,

205 Gl.s. at 11s. £112 15

Bot. of Franklin & Spifford.

2 Hhds West india Rum.

113—12

110— 6

—223 18

We shall see, presently, the Use
which was made of this Rum.
That it was not for “Medicinal
Purposes,” will be inferred.

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“ In Secret Committee, the 9th of Oct., 1776.

“ Present—Gilbert Livingston, Robert Harper,

“ Jacob Cuyler, Robt. R. Livingston.

“ *Resolved*, That the inch-and-a-half Iron at
“ Poughkeepsie be worked up into Chain in order
“ to strengthen the large Chain.

“ *Resolved*, That a Fortification be erected at
“ West Point in order to Defend the Chain, and
“ that Robt. Harper, Henry Wisner, Jacob Cuyler
“ and Gilbert Livingston be a Committee to carry
“ the said Resolve into execution.

“ *Resolved*, That the said Gentlemen erect any
“ other Work that they may deem necessary for
“ the Defence of the Chain; or the security of
“ Anthony’s Nose, which commands Fort Mont-
“ gomery.

“ *Resolved*, That a Letter be written to the Hon.
“ the Congress praying Leave to employ the Car-
“ penters now at Work upon the Ships building
“ at Poughkeepsie, and that Robt. R. Livingston
“ draft the Letter.”

The last Meeting of the Committee, of which
we have the Minutes, was held Oct. 14, 1776.
At this Meeting we have the name of Mr. Machin¹

¹ THOMAS MACHIN was born in Staffordshire, England, 20th March, 1744; was employed by Brindley in constructing the Canal of the Duke of Bridgewater; afterwards made a Voyage to the East Indies, and in 1772 came to America, for

the purpose of examining a Copper Mine in New Jersey. He afterwards took up his Residence in Boston, and espousing the popular Feeling of the Time, made one of the Tea Party in 1773; was wounded at Bunker Hill, while act-

first mentioned, but not in connection with the construction of the Chain, he having been previously employed in completing the Forts. He was directed to construct Batteries. The following were the Proceedings :

ing as Lieut. of Artillery ; 18th Jan., 1776, was commissioned 2d Lieut. of Artillery in Col. Knox's Regiment, and was employed from April to June in that Year in laying out the Fortifications for the Defence of the Town and Harbour of Boston ; 21st July, 1776, was directed by Washington to proceed to the Highlands on the Hudson River to Act as Engineer under Col. Geo. Clinton, and there continued several Years, in constructing the Fortifications which the Government undertook for the Purpose of rendering the River impassable to British Vessels. In October, 1777, when Forts Montgomery and Clinton, were taken by the British, Capt. Machin was wounded by a Musket Ball, which entered his Breast and passed out under his right Shoulder. On his Recovery, he was again actively engaged in repairing the Damages which the British had done to the Forts, and in throwing Booms and other Obstructions across the River. In April, 1779, he accompanied Col. Van Schaick's Expedition against the Onondagas, of which he kept a Journal ; in May of the same Year he surveyed the Water Level between Albany

and Schenectady, with a View to the Supply of Albany with Water ; and in June joined Sullivan's Expedition to the Genesee Valley, as Engineer. A Map of this Expedition, executed by him, is in the possession of his Son, Capt. Thomas Machin. In the Fall of 1781, he aided in laying out the Works of the American Army then besieging Yorktown. In August, 1782, he married Susan Daughter of James Van Nostrand, of Huntington, L. I. In 1783, he began a Settlement at New Grange, Ulster County, and in the following Year erected several Mills at the Great Pond, a few Miles West of Newburgh. In 1787 he formed one of a Company for the Coinage of Copper, which does not seem to have been prosperous. March 12th, 1793, he was Commissioned a Captain, to take Rank as such from 21st Aug., 1780. In January, 1797, he removed to the Town of Mohawk, in Montgomery County, N. Y., where he practised Surveying, and where he died, at his Residence in Charleston, a Part of the old Town of Mohawk, 3d April, 1819, aged 72. (Simms's *History of Schoharie County*).

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“FORT CONSTITUTION, Oct. 14th, 1776.

“Present—Mr. Harper, Mr. Cuyler, Mr. G. Livingston, Gen. J. Clinton, Col. Bailey, Mr. Machin, Engineer.

“Considering that there are no Works erected
“at this Post that can defend the Chain proposed
“to be stretched across the River here, and the
“impracticability of executing any in Season for
“the above purpose, and believing that the River
“at Fort Montgomery in the narrowest place is
“but 1600 feet wide, which exceeds the width of
“the River here but 100 feet, therefore,

“*Resolved*, That Mr. Machin immediately prepare a place on each Side the River at Fort
“Montgomery to fasten the Ends of the intended
“Chain to; that he place two or three Guns in a
“small Breast-work to be erected for that purpose
“on the Flat place just under the North end of the
“Grand Battery, where the Fire-Rafts now lay;
“also a small work, if Time permit, near the
“Water Edge, on the South side of Poplopen’s
“Kill.”

On the Back of these Minutes is an Outline Map of the Position of the Chain, the Forts and the Batteries erected and to be erected. The Position of the Ground Batteries will be seen (*g h*) on the Map.¹ The precise Time at which the Chain was placed across the River is not shown. By the

¹ *Ante* p. 64.

Minutes last given it is apparent that it was then nearly ready ; and we immediately after find the following Resolution passed by the Convention, on the 22d October, viz :

“ *Resolved*, That Mr. Gilbert Livingston, one of
 “ the Secret Committee, be directed to send down
 “ to Fort Montgomery such parts of the Chain as
 “ is fixed to the Logs ; and that Mr. Henry Wisner,
 “ Jr., coöperate with him in carrying this Measure
 “ into Execution in the most Safe and Expeditious
 “ Manner possible.”

The next Intimation which we have of it is in a Letter addressed by the President of the Convention to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, stating that the Chain had broken twice. From these two Dates it is evident that the Chain must have been first placed across the River in the early part of November. The Letter last referred to, says :

“ The great length of the Chain, being upwards
 “ of 1800 feet, the Bulk of the Logs which was
 “ necessary to support it, the immense weight of
 “ the Water which it accumulated, have baffled
 “ all our Efforts. It separated twice after holding
 “ only a few Hours.”¹

¹ Upon receiving Notice of the breaking of the Chain, the Convention, on the 23d Nov., directed the Secret Committee to refuse Payment to the Smiths who made it. The following is the Resolution :

“ *Resolved*, That the Committee
 “ appointed to Obstruct the Navigation of Hudson's River, be in-

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The breaking of the Chain seems to have been a Difficulty not apprehended by those engaged in its Construction, and upon the Occurrence of that Event, considerable doubt was expressed as to the Success of any Effort to Obstruct the Navigation with a Chain. A Conference was called in reference to the Subject at which Tench Tilghman, Robt. Yates, Gen. Heath and Gen. Schuyler gave their Views as to the best Mode of fixing and supporting the Chain. Gen. Schuyler's suggestions were submitted by Letter as follows: "A Chain sufficiently long to reach across the River ought to have better supporters than floating Logs; perhaps Caissons from thirty to forty feet

"frustrated not to Pay the Blacksmiths who made the Chain which was lately drawn across said River, and broken by the Tide, until such Time as the sufficiency of their Work can be properly Examined; and that said Committee take proper Measures for that Purpose."

The Secret Committee immediately appointed a Commission to Examine the Workmanship of the Chain, who reported as follows:

"FORT MONTGOMERY, }
"December 9, 1776. }

"These are to Certify that the Chain that has been stretched across the North River, at this Post, has been broken twice; the first, a Swivel broke, which came from Ticonderoga, which was

"not welded Sound; the second Time, a Clink broke, which was made at Poughkeepsie, in a solid Part of the Chain, and no flaw to be seen in any Part of said Chain. Which we do Certify at the request of Messrs. Odle and Vanduzer.

"JAMES CLINTON, B. G.

"ABM SWARTWOUT, Captain,

"JAS. ROSECRANS, Captain,

"DANIEL LAWRENCE, Lieut."

On receiving this Report the Convention, on the 12th Dec.,

"Resolved, That the Committee to Obstruct the Navigation of the Hudson River, be directed to pay the Blacksmiths who made the Chain which was lately drawn across said River, according to their agreement with them."

“square * * * might answer the end. If
 “twenty-five such Caffoons were sunk at nearly
 “equal distances, the intermediate space between
 “each would be about two hundred feet. The
 “tops of the Caffoons might come up to within
 “two feet of the surface of the Water at ebb Tide,
 “and the Chain run through them.” This Sug-
 gession was considered impracticable from the
 depth of the Water (80 feet). Mr. Machin, the
 Engineer engaged in the Erection of the Forts,
 was present at the Consultation and suggested that,
 “with proper alterations” the Chain might still be
 made useful; and on the 30th Nov., 1776, the
 Committee passed the following Resolution, viz :

“*Resolved*, That Mr. Machin, the Engineer be
 “requested and authorized to alter and fix the
 “Chain intended for the Obstruction of the Hud-
 “son’s River, &c.”

We do not find anything showing the precise
 Nature of the alterations proposed by Mr. Machin.
 Sparks in his *Life of Washington*, intimates that
 they consisted in placing the Chain *under* the
 Floats, instead of over them. However, this may
 be, it is evident that the alterations were in the
 Floats, and not in the Chain. Whatever they
 were, they were immediately commenced and
 prosecuted with Vigor. The Work was removed
 to New Windsor—where the *Chevaux-de-Frise* for
 the Pollopel’s Island Obstructions were being pre-

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pared—and conducted under the Supervision of Gov. Clinton. On the 7th March, 1777, a Committee was directed to visit the Fortifications in the Highlands and report on the Progress of the Obstructions. This Committee reported that the Work was in a “great forwardness”—“the Timber for buoying the Chain prepared,” &c. In a Letter from Gov. Clinton, dated New Windsor, March 14th, 1777, he says:

“We only wait now for Anchors and Cables to draw the Chain across the River; the Logs for buoying it are all completely fixed, and are this Day sent off in a Raft down the River.”

On the 23d March, he writes:

“A number of our Hands were sent down to Fort Montgomery Yesterday, to prepare for drawing the Chain across the River,” &c.

No farther Difficulty occurred with the Chain, and it continued in good Order up to the Time of its Removal by the British.

The Expedition under Vaughan and Wallace passed up the River on the 4th of October, 1777, and attacked and reduced Forts Clinton and Montgomery on the 7th of that Month. At the Time of the Attack the Forts were not half Garriſoned. Many of the Men were off to their Farms, engaged in getting in their Winter Grain; and, in Addition to this, Gen. Putnam, mistaking

the Point of Attack, had taken some twelve hundred Men for the Relief of Fort Independence and Peekskill Landing. The noise of the Conflict at Fort Montgomery made him aware of his Error, and he hastened back. Before he arrived, however, the Enemy had possessed themselves of the Forts. The Americans made a most gallant Defence. "Never," says Gen. Putnam in his Report to Gen. Washington, "did Men behave with more Spirit and Activity than our Troops upon this occasion. They repulsed the Enemy three Times, who where in number at least five to one." The Enemy destroyed Forts Montgomery and Constitution and the Obstructions in the River. Fort Clinton was Repaired and occupied by them, and its Name changed to Fort *Vaughan*. Their Occupation lasted twenty Days, when, on the return of the Expedition, this Fort was also destroyed, and the Enemy retreated to New York, smarting under the Defeat of Burgoyne at Saratoga.

Loffing, in his *Field-Book*, drops the Curtain over the Obstructions as follows :

"Above the Boom, the Americans had two Frigates, two Galleys and an armed Sloop. On the fall of the Forts, the Crews of these Vessels spread their Sails, and slipping their Cables, attempted to escape up the River, but the Wind was adverse and they were obliged to abandon them. They set them on Fire, when they left, to

Chain, &c., at Fort Montgomery. 87

“prevent their falling into the Hands of the Ene-
“my. The Flames suddenly broke forth, and, as
“every Sail was set, the Vessels soon became mag-
“nificent Pyramids of Fire. The Reflection on
“the steep Face of the opposite Mountains, and
“the long train of ruddy Light which shone upon
“the Water for a prodigious distance had a won-
“derful Effect; while the Ear was awfully filled
“with the continued Echoes from the rocky shores
“as the Flames reached the loaded Cannons. The
“whole was sublimely terminated by the Explo-
“sions, which left all again in Darkness. Early in
“the Morning, the Obstructions in the River,
“which had cost the Americans a quarter million
“of Dollars, Provincial Money, were destroyed by
“the British Fleet.”¹

Thus it will be seen that the Obstructions at Fort Montgomery failed in their Purpose. The Chain and Booms, and the armed Ships and Brigs, were alike without Avail—the Forts were the Key to the River, and these reduced, the Passage was at once unlocked.

A mass of Correspondence, in respect to the

¹ The exact Cost of the Obstructions cannot now be ascertained, but were estimated at £70,000 sterling. The Chain was of most excellent Workmanship. It was taken up by the British and sent to England, and thence to Gibraltar, where it was of great Use in protecting the Shipping at the Moles. (*Beatson's Naval and Mil. Memoirs*, iv, 236). Another Boom near Fort Constitution, which must likewise have Cost much Money and Labour, was rendered Useless. (*Ib.*) A large Portion of the Chain was from Fort Ticonderoga, and the Remainder manufactured at Poughkeepsie.

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Operations of the Secret Committee, is preserved, from which we cull a few spicy Specimens. Under Date of Sept. 11, 1776, the Convention addressed to the Committee the following Letter :

“ FISHKILL, Sept. 11, 1776.

“ SIR: It is conceived highly necessary that the
“ Iron Chain should be immediately dispatched.
“ If it is finished, pray send it down to the Fort
“ without Delay. If it is not finished let no Time
“ be lost, and in the Interim give us the earliest
“ particular Account of its present State and when
“ it will probably be finished.

“ I am, Sir, your very humble Servt.,

“ ABM. YATES, Pres.

“ To Gilbert Livingston, Esq., Poughkeepsie.”

Gilbert Livingston replied to this Letter in the following satisfactory Manner :

“ POUGHKEEPSIE, Sept. 14th, 1776.

“ SIR; Your Letter of the 11th current is safely
“ came to Hand. Am sorry it is not in my Power
“ to take the Chain down to the Fort. The Iron
“ the Committee (by the advice of the Smiths)
“ first engaged, on Working up we find vastly
“ short of the Quantity wanted. Since I have been
“ here, have been obliged (no other Member of
“ the Committee being with me) to send an Ex-
“ press to the Forge for ten tun more. This, I
“ fear, will cause a Delay we by no Means expect-
“ ed, and as finishing the Work depends on the

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“ Contingency of getting the Iron, it is impossible
“ for me to give the Time when it will be finished.
“ I sincerely wish that at least one of the Gentle-
“ men of the Committee were with me, as I ex-
“ pect to be obliged to go down to the Fort, to
“ see that the Apparatus is got ready to fasten and
“ stretch the Chain with, that there may be no
“ delay on that account. If one of the Gentlemen
“ comes up, it will be necessary that he bring at
“ least two or three thousand Pounds with him, as
“ our Treasury is nearly exhausted.

“ Am, Sir, with great respect,

“ Your very humble Servt,

“ GILBERT LIVINGSTON.

“ To Abm. Yates, Jr., Esq.,

“ President of the Con. of N. Y.”

On the 21st of August, Carpenters were much wanted, and a Letter was addressed to the Chairman of the Safety Committee at Kingston to procure them. As the Pay offered was exceedingly Liberal, we Copy this Letter :

“ POUGHKEEPSIE, Aug. 21st, 1776.

“ SIR :

“ We stand in need of ten or twelve Carpen-
“ ters to execute some Works for the Defence of
“ the Hudson’s River. Take the liberty to request

“ the Favor of you to procure them immediately
 “ and Dispatch them here. They must bring with
 “ them round Adzes, broad and Wood Axes,
 “ Gauges, Squares and Compasses. We shall al-
 “ low them 7s 6d and half pint Rum per Day,
 “ they finding themselves with other necessaries.

“ We remain, with respect,

“ Your humble Servts.,

“ CHRISTR. TAPPEN.

“ GILBERT LIVINGSTON.

“ To John Sleight, Esq.,

“ Chairman of the Com. of Kingfton.”

As may be presumed, this Letter brought the
 Carpenters. *Ten* were immediately found by Mr.
 Sleight and sent to Poughkeepsie on the 22d Aug.
 The securing of the Carpenters will probably ex-
 plain the following order :

“ SIR :

“ You are hereby ordered to Repair with a
 “ File of 4 Men under your command, to the
 “ Storehouse of Capt. John Schenck, and there
 “ take out of the said Store two hhds. of Rum
 “ marked “ Congress,” and take the Gauge and
 “ wantage thereof, and send them by the Wagon
 “ herewith sent—the one to the Ship Yards and
 “ the other to the Store-House of Mr. Richd.
 “ Davis, and this shall be your sufficient Authority

Chain, &c., at Fort Montgomery. 91

“ from the Secret Committee of the State of New
“ York.

“ CHRIST. TAPPEN.	} Members of the Committee.
“ WILLIAM PAULDING.	
“ Poughkeepsie, Aug. 16, 1776.	
“ To Lieut. Theodorus Brett.”	

Here is a Bill for Services which shows the
great Difficulty of fixing the Chain :

“ The Secret Committee of the Convention of the
“ State of New York,

“ To Ebenezer Young, Dr.

“ 1776. Expenses from New York to	
“ Poughkeepsie, - - - - -	£1 0 0
“ Express to Fishkill, - - - - -	6 0
“ Board from the 10th August to the	
“ 25th December, - - - - -	12 13 0
“ 141 Days Superintending the fixing	
“ the Chain and Obstructing the Na-	
“ vigation at 12s per day, - - - -	84 12 0
	<hr/>
	£98 11 0

“ Errors excepted. EBENEZER YOUNG.

“ Received, Aug. 10th, 1777, of Mr. Christo-
“ pher Tappen, one of the Members of the said
“ Committee, ninety-eight Pounds eleven Shillings
“ in full of the above Act.

“ 98 11. EBENEZER YOUNG.”

A large quantity of the Iron for the Chain was furnished by Robt. Livingston. We have several Letters from him to the Committee in regard to the amount supplied by him. In a Letter dated, "Manor Livingston, 11 August, 1776," Mr. Livingston says: "I have now brought down to my Wharf two tuns of Iron, and there is now three tuns more drawn ready to come down on Tuesday; and expect by Saturday to have five tuns more. All the Iron made since your last Orders is 2 inch and the Bars as long as we could make them." In a Letter dated "Manor Livingston, Sept. 2, 1776," Mr. Livingston renders a Bill of Iron furnished to that date. He says he cannot furnish the Iron "under £45 per tun, as my Workmen cannot Work at the same Wages they have done; every Article they want to support their Famileys, being double, and some Articles, such as Linens, more than double." He farther says: "You are pleased to say that as soon as you have the whole quantity of Iron you want you will draw an Order on your Treasurer for the Payment. I hope that Gentleman does not live wide of Poughkeepsie, for if he does, I should not chuse in these difficult Times to go after him." The amount of the Bill rendered was £902—or for 22 tons of Iron, about. The total amount of Iron furnished by him does not appear. The last Letter from him bears Date Oct. 6th, 1776, and in this he speaks of Iron then being

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made. Mr. Livingston's Letters show that Iron was made in different sized Bars—2, $2\frac{1}{2}$, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch, the former probably for the Chain, and the latter for strengthening the Chain, as appears by the Minutes of Oct. 9th. The Price charged by Mr. Livingston was regarded by the Convention as exorbitant—£45 per ton—and they gave the matter an Investigation on a Charge that he had sold Iron to others for £17 and £20; but the Result does not appear.



IV.

O B S T R U C T I O N S

AT

POLLOPEL'S ISLAND.



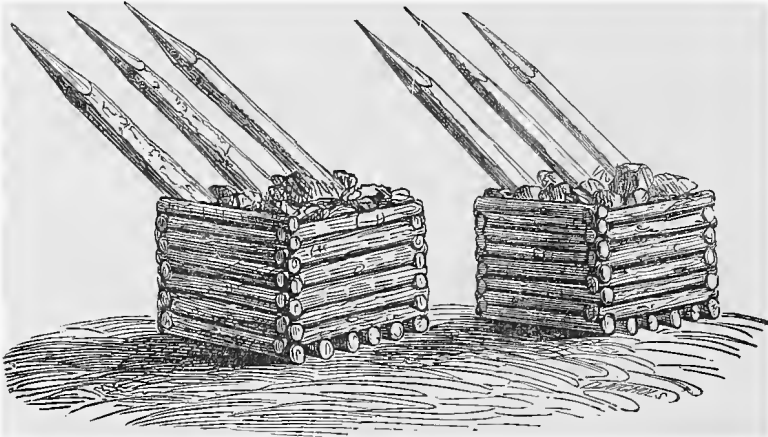
THE
O B S T R U C T I O N S
AT
POLLOPEL'S ISLAND.

UNLIKE those at Forts Clinton and Montgomery, the Character of the Obstructions to the Navigation of the River, extending from Pollopel's Island to a Point near Murderer's Creek, have not been a Matter of uncertainty. Those Obstructions consisted of *Chevaux-de-Frise*¹ formed of square Frames of Timber,

¹ CHEVAUX DE FRISE, (*Friesland Horses*, so called because first used at the Siege of Groningen, in that Province, in 1658), were at first armed Beams of square Timber or Iron, used to defend the Fronts of Camps, Breaches, &c. They were usually from 15 to 18 feet long,

and connected by Chains, each being perforated with small Holes, to receive Rods of Wood or Iron, pointed at their Extremities, and, when moved in any Direction, affording a sort of Hedge of Spears. (*Enc. Americana*). The *Chevaux de Frise* used on this Occasion are

or *Cribs*, from which extended Spears, the Points of which were armed with Iron, of sufficient Length to reach within a few Feet of the Surface of the Water. The Cribs, or Frames, thus prepared



were loaded with Stone and sunk at such distances across the Channel as to present a Row of Spears to approaching Vessels; which Spears, had a Vessel been run upon them, would have pierced its Bottom and caused it to sink.

At the Time the Chain at Fort Montgomery was first stretched across the River, it broke twice (as we have stated in our previous Article in relation to that Obstruction). The Failure of this

here frequently called *Cassoons*, because they were supported in *Caifons*, a kind of Cofferdam, constructed of Logs and filled with

Stones, as represented in the Engraving. The Orthography of these Terms is that of the Original Documents.

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. 99

Attempt to fix the Chain led to a Conference between Robt. R. Livingston, Major-Gen. Heath, and Brig. Gen. Clinton (at which Mr. Machin, who in the meantime had been appointed Engineer in the place of Mr. Romans, assisted), in reference to the Obstructions, and to determine what further Steps should be taken. At this Conference, Gen. James Clinton¹ suggested the sinking of *Chevaux-*

¹ JAMES CLINTON, the fourth Son of Colonel Charles Clinton, was born Aug. 9th, 1736, at the Residence of his Father, in New Windsor, Ulster County, N. Y. He received an excellent Education, and acquired much Proficiency in the exact Sciences; but his ruling Inclination was for a Military Life. He was appointed an Ensign in the Second Regiment of the Militia of Ulster County, by Sir Charles Hardy, the Governor, and rose to the Rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the same Regiment, before the commencement of the Revolution. During the War of 1756, between the English and French, he displayed much Courage, and particularly distinguished himself at the Capture of Fort Frontenac, where he was a Captain under Colonel Bradstreet, and rendered essential Service by taking a Sloop of War on Lake Ontario, which had obstructed the Advance of the Army. The Confidence which was reposed in his Character may be estimated by his Appointment as Captain-Commandant of the four Regiments le-

vied for the Protection of the Western Frontiers of the Counties of Ulster and Orange, a Post of great Responsibility and Danger, as it devolved upon him the protection of a Line of Settlements of at least 50 miles in Extent, which were continually threatened by the Savages. (*Encyc. Americana.*) At the Close of the old French War, he retired to his Farm at Little Britain, and married Mary, daughter of Egbert De Witt, a young Lady of great Respectability, whose Ancestors were from Holland. He had four Sons by this Marriage: Alexander, who was Private Secretary to his Uncle, Gov. George Clinton; Charles, who became a Physician; De Witt, afterwards the distinguished Governor of New York; and George, who was a Lawyer. Gen. Clinton's second Wife was a Mrs. Gray. He had several Children by this Marriage, one of whom became the Wife of Dr. Francis Bolton, to whose Son we are indebted for the Minutes of the Secret Committee; and his Son, James Graham Clinton, represented the Orange and Sullivan

de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. The Conference reported its Proceedings to the Convention, who regarded Gen. Clinton's suggestion with Favour, and appointed Henry Wisner and Gilbert Livingston to take Soundings of the River. On the 22d Nov., 1776, this Committee reported the Result of their Investigations, as follows:

"We have founded the River, beginning be-

Distrikt in Congress for several Years. June 30th, 1775, the War of the Revolution having just commenced, he was appointed, by the Continental Congress, Colonel of the Third Regiment of New York Forces. In the same Year, he marched with Montgomery to Quebec. (*Ibid.*) He was made Brigadier-General, Aug. 9th, 1776. In Oct., 1777, he commanded, under Gov. Clinton, at Fort Clinton, which, with Fort Montgomery, separated from it only by a Creek, defended the Hudson, below West Point, against the Ascent of the Enemy. Sir Henry Clinton, in order to favor the Designs of Burgoyne, attacked these Forts, Oct. 6th, with three thousand Men, and carried them by Storm, they being defended by only about five hundred Militiamen. A brave Resistance was made, from four o'Clock in the Afternoon until dark, when the Garrison was overpowered. (*Allen's Am. Biog. Dict.*) With the utmost Difficulty Gen. Clinton escaped. During the Engagement he received a severe Wound in the

Leg, from which he suffered intensely. He reached the Woods, and wandered throughout the Night, enduring extreme Torture. In the Morning he caught a Horse, and rode sixteen Miles before he came to a House, the Inmates of which were startled by the frightful Spectacle he presented, his Regimentals covered with Blood, his Cheeks flushed with Fever, and his Voice hollow and husky. In 1779, with sixteen hundred Men, he joined General Sullivan in his Expedition against the Indians. Proceeding up the Mohawk in Bateaux about fifty-four Miles above Schenectady, he conveyed his Boats by Land, from Canajoharie to the Head of Otsego Lake, one of the Sources of the Susquehanna, down which Stream he must proceed, in order to join Sullivan. As the Water in the Outlet was too low to float his Bateaux, he constructed a Dam across it, and thus accumulated the Water in the Lake. By letting out this Water, and thus suddenly flushing the Stream, his Boats and Troops were rapidly conveyed to Tioga,

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. 101

“tween Verplanck's and Stoney Point, thence
“Northward through the Highlands to Pollopel's
“Island, and find no Part of the River in that
“Distance less than eighty feet deep in the Main
“Channel, till within a short Distance of the Is-
“land.

“From the Island to the western Shore, found
“by Measurement, the Distance to be fifty-three

where he found Sullivan, who had ascended the Susquehanna. (*Ibid.*) After one Engagement, in which the Indians were defeated with great Loss, all Resistance on their Part ceased; and, Desolation being brought home to their own Settlements, they fled to the British Forts of Niagara; where they died in great Numbers, in Consequence of living on faltered Provisions, to which they were unaccustomed. (*Enc. Americana.*) It was thought that this severe Blow would put a Stop to further Incursions by the Indians. Such, however, unfortunately for the Frontier Settlements, was not the Effect. In the following Summer their Depredations were renewed, and continued during the War. (*Marshall's Washington.*) In 1780, Gen. Clinton was placed in Command of the Northern Department, with his Head Quarters at Albany. That Post had been one of great Responsibility during the War, and at the Time of Clinton's appointment had lost none of its Importance. The Spring of 1781, found the Troops

stationed there destitute of Provisions, and in a State of Mutiny. Word was brought to Gen. Clinton that one of the Companies had refused to obey Orders to return to Quarters. Snatching up his Pistols he walked to the Head of the refractory Company, and casting his Eye along the Line for a Moment, he thundered out, “March!” but not a Soldier stirred. Turning to the Ringleader, he presented his Pistol to his Breast, and told him to advance or he would shoot him dead on the Spot. The Captain knew well what kind of a Man he had to deal with, and pale with Rage and Fear, moved on. By Energy and Resolution the Mutiny was quelled. In the Winter of 1782, some Promotions were made in which junior Officers took Precedence over Gen. Clinton. The veteran Soldier could not brook what he deemed a great Injury. He solicited and obtained Leave to withdraw from the active Duties of the Camp. He made his last Appearance in Arms on the Evacuation of the City of New York by the British, when he bade

“Chains; the Channel near the Middle of the River at that Place is about eight Chains broad, and fifty feet deep; from the Channel the Water shoals gradually on both sides to the Flats, which are about eight or ten Chains broad, reckoning both Sides.

“This above described Place is the only one in our Opinion, that it is possible for an Obstruction to be made by *docking*, effectually to impede the Navigation of Hudson’s River, at any place above the South Part of the Highlands.”

Upon the strength of this Report, the Conference determined to adopt General Clinton’s Suggestion. In a Report to the Committee of Safety, dated Nov. 26, 1776, they say :

“It is proposed, with Approbation of the Hon. Congress, to Obstruct the Navigation in this Part by *Cassoons*, which it is conceived will be very Practicable.”

At the Session of the Committee of Safety

an affectionate Farewell to his Commander-in Chief, and retired to his ample Estate. He did not, however, enjoy uninterrupted Repose, but was often called by his fellow Citizens to the Performance of civic Duties. He was one of the Commissioners to adjust the boundary Line between Pennsylvania and New York; a Member of the Legislature, and of the Convention which

adopted the present Constitution of the United States; and a State Senator. All of these Offices he filled with Credit to himself, and Usefulness to his Country. Gen. Clinton was of a mild and affectionate Disposition, but when aroused by Injuries and Insults, displayed extraordinary Energy. In Battle he was calm and collected. He died Dec. 22, 1812. (*Encyc. Americana.*)

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. 103

held on that Day, the following Resolution was passed :

“ *Resolved*, That the Navigation of Hudson’s
“ River be Obstructed near Pollopel’s Island at the
“ Northern entrance of the Highlands, agreeable
“ to the Plan recommended by Gen. James Clin-
“ ton,¹ and that the Convention of this State will
“ exert every Measure necessary for that purpose.”

Up to this Time, the Convention was unwearied in urging upon the Attention of Congress and Gen. Washington the Importance of giving the Obstructions at Pollopel’s Island their Attention. Finding that there was little to be hoped for in that Direction, by this Resolution they seem to have determined to go on with the Work at their own Hazard and Expence. In accordance with this Determination, at the Session of the Convention on the 27th of November a Preamble and Resolution were passed offering to Gen. Schuyler the Superintendence of the Work. The following is the Resolution :

“ *Resolved*, That a Letter be immediately written
“ to Major General Schuyler, informing him of
“ the Survey that has been taken of Hudson’s River
“ at Pollopel’s Island, and requesting him to take

¹ The Honour of the Suggestion to employ *Cassons*, for the Obstruction of the River, clearly belongs to Gen. Schuyler, (see his Letter in connection with the Fort Mont- gomery Obstructions). Gen. Clinton appears to have examined and approved the Plan, and recommended its Adoption.

“on himself the Superintendence and Direction of
 “such Works as he may think Necessary, either
 “there or elsewhere, for the Security of Hudson’s
 “River.”

A Letter was accordingly written to Gen. Schuyler, and another to General Washington asking him to confirm the Appointment of Gen. Schuyler.

At the Session, on the 28th November, Mr. Duane submitted a Draft of a Letter to Major General Heath,¹ from which the following is an Extract :

“We have taken into Consideration the Plan
 “suggested by Brigadier General Clinton for Ob-
 “structing the River opposite Pollopel’s Island,

¹ WILLIAM HEATH was born March 2, 1737, at Roxbury, Mass., of which Town one of his Ancestors was a Settler in 1636, and was bred a Farmer. In 1775 he was appointed Provincial Brigadier, and also Brigadier of the United States, June 22; and Aug. 9, 1776, Major General. When the Army removed to New York, he commanded near King’s Bridge. In 1777 he was intrusted with the Command of the Eastern Department near Boston, and the Prisoners of Saratoga fell under his Care. In June, 1779, he returned to the Main Army, and commanded the Troops on the Hudson, and in that Station, for the most Part, he remained until the Close of the War.

In 1793 he was appointed Judge of Probate for the County of Norfolk. He was several Times one of the Electors of President. He published Memoirs of Maj-Gen. Heath, containing Anecdotes, Details of Skirmishes, Battles, &c., during the American War, 8vo., 1798. Notwithstanding the Indications of an excusable Vanity and Simplicity, it exhibits him as an honest, faithful Patriot, and presents many interesting Occurrences of the War. He says of himself, “he is of middling Stature, light Complexion, very corpulent, and bald-headed.” He was the last surviving Major General of the War. He died at the place of his Nativity, Jan. 24, 1814, aged 77. (Heath’s *Memoirs*.)

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“and conceiving it to be practicable, we are determined, with the Permission of Congress, to proceed with the utmost Vigor to carry it into Effect.”

At this Stage of the Proceedings, a Conference was held between Mr. Livingston, on the Part of the Convention, and Gens. Heath and Clinton—the former in Command of the Continental Forces at Peekskill, and the latter in Command of the Forces in the Highlands—in reference to the Obstructions. The Result of this Conference was reported to the Convention by Mr. Livingston, at its Session on the 30th November, as appears by the Minutes, as follows :

“Mr. Livingston informed the Convention that he had Conferred with Major General Heath and Brigadier General Clinton about Obstructing Hudson's River at Pollopel's Island (at which Conference Mr. Machin assisted), that it appeared to them to be extremely Practicable, and that he had the pleasure of assuring the Convention that both Generals seemed strongly impressed with a Sense of the Importance of that Work and determined to give every Assistance in their Power to perfect the same, or rather to *take it upon themselves*, which His Excellency Gen. Washington's orders on that Head (which Gen. Heath was so obliging as to Communicate to Mr. Livingston), happily enabled them to do.

“That in this Conference it was determined
 “that 500 Men, under the Command of Brig.
 “Gen. Clinton, should this Day March for Fort
 “Constitution, in order to begin the Work on Sun-
 “day Morning, in case they can be provided with
 “300 Axes by this Convention, all other Tools
 “having been furnished by the Continental Stores.”

Upon Mr. Livingston's Suggestion, a Series of Resolutions were adopted extending to Generals Heath and Clinton every Assistance in the Power of the Convention. Mr. Cuyler and Mr. Duer were authorized and directed “to Employ such
 “and so many Persons as they shall think fit, to
 “Purchase and Collect 300 felling Axes; and that
 “they have Power to impress the same where
 “there is more than one in a Family,” that the Persons so employed “set out on this Business im-
 “mediately and return all the Axes they shall
 “obtain this Day to Gen. Clinton at New Wind-
 “for, by 7 o’Clock on Sunday Morning.” Boats were also ordered collected for carrying Stone and that “the Boats be delivered to Gen. Clinton, or
 “his Agent (Mr. Machin), at New Windsor.” The Timber which had been collected at Pough-keepsie for the Fort Montgomery Obstruction was ordered to be “immediately rafted to New Wind-
 “for.”¹ Gilbert Livingston was directed to cause

¹ Among the Clinton Papers we find the following Letter to Mr. Livingston, one of the Secret Com- mittee, in reference to the Timber and Iron here referred to:

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. 107

“ three tons of Iron of an inch and a half, and one
“ inch and three quarters thick, or such other
“ quantities and sizes as Gen. Clinton may direct,
“ to be delivered as soon as possible at New Wind-
“ for,” and £400 were appropriated to “ defray

“ NEW WINDSOR, }
“ 12th Dec, 1776. }

“ DEAR SIR—Last Night Mr. Ebenezer Young arrived here with a Raft of Timber said to contain 74 Logs of thirty Feet long and upwards, and 67 of about 13 or 14 Feet, and a Quantity of Ropes, Anchors, &c. For the Latter he will deliver you the Engineer's Receipt. As to the Timber a great Part of it is so Short that it cannot be of any Use to us in making Blocks to obstruct the Navigation of the River, having, before it arrived, got a Sufficiency of that Length. Had it been sent sooner, we might have used it to Advantage. The longer Logs may be used in this Business, but I am informed that most if not all of them have been procured at such an extravagant Price that I can't, without particular Directions from the Honorable the Convention, think of doing it. Timber we can get at little Expense indeed, by the Soldiery, faster than we can possibly work is up on Blocks—at the highest Computation not to exceed 5s a Log for those quite as Good for our Purpose as any in the Raft. This being the Case, I should not be able to justify the using them in the Raft at the immoderate Price of five or six

Pounds a Piece, which I have been informed they cost you. I have, however, ordered the Raft to be laid upon Ellifon's Cove, and secured there that it may be employed here or sent back to Poughkeepsie, as your Committee or the Convention shall direct. Perhaps it may be applied to some other Purpose that will better justify the Use of such high priced Timber. The Iron you sent—except the quantity I applied for and of the Size—I don't imagine we shall be able to use. If, therefore, you think you can dispose of it at Poughkeepsie, I will order it back—which I should have done immediately had not the Vessel that brought it been taken to carry part of the Northern Troops to Haverstraw. It is Safe in Store, and if I possibly can Use it or dispose of it to any Advantage for you I will.

“ I am your most obdt. Servt.,

“ GEO. CLINTON.

“ To Gilbert Livingston, Esq.”

In the Fort Montgomery Article the Reader will have noticed the Bill of White & Livingston, for Logs, of which these were probably a Part. We infer that these Logs were subsequently used in the West Point Chain.

“the expenses thereof.” This Action rendered unnecessary the appointment of Gen. Schuyler—Gens. Heath and Clinton having taken the Work upon themselves—and hence a Copy of the Resolutions passed were forwarded to him, together with a Resolution that “Major General Schuyler “be requested to meet and consult with Gen. “Clinton on the Plan for Obstructing Hudson’s “River near Pollopel’s Island.”

From these Proceedings it will be seen that the Obstructions at Pollopel’s Island were under the immediate Superintendence of Gen. Geo. Clinton. The place selected for the Construction of the *Chevaux-de-Frise* was at New Windsor, where remains of the Forges still exist. The Troops referred to by Mr. Livingston, in his Statement to the Convention, arrived at Fort Constitution at the Time appointed, and the felling of Timber for the Construction of the *Chevaux-de-Frise* immediately commenced.¹ From this Time we find

¹ The following Letter from Gen. Clinton to the Convention, shows the Commencement of the Work:

“FORT CONSTITUTION, }
“ 1st Dec. 1776. }

“SIR—I arrived here Yesterday Evening with two Regiments, consisting of about 500 Men, destined for garrisoning this Fort, and Obstructing the Navigation of the River near Pollopin’s Island, agreeable to the Resolve of the Convention. I immediately sent off the Engineer with about one hundred

Men to get Timber for the purpose, but I am so unfortunate as not to have Axes for the tenth Part of the number, though I have used my best Endeavors to procure as many as I possibly could. Axes, therefore, three or four light Anchors and Cables, Drag Ropes, screws, Scaws and other Boats for collecting of Stones I must beg the Convention will endeavor to Supply me with as quick as possible. The Business otherwise must in a great Measure stand still. I have Smiths

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. 109

the Convention acting in conjunction with Gens. Heath and Clinton in constructing the Work. On the 4th of December, Gen. Clinton forwarded to the Convention the following Memoranda of Articles wanted :

“ Wanted by the Detachment employed in Ob-
“ structing the Navigation of Hudson's River, near

employed in making Axes, and I shall make them Work Day and Night to replace those you may Supply me with ; and when Gen. Lee's Division passes the River, and they are now at Peekkill, we shall be able to get a number of Boats from that Quarter, but for the present we must be Supplied by Convention if possible. I have about 40 Artificers, which are as many as can well be employed, and being furnished with the above Articles only, I hope I shall be able to carry on the Work without troubling your Honorable House in some Time for any other Supplies.

“ Capt. Bedlow has hitherto acted here as a Commissary of Stores, and Mr. Lawrence as Clerk of the Check, and as there are no other Persons appointed to take charge of the Stores, Tools, &c., or keep the Accounts which will be necessarily multiplied by this business, I am of opinion it will be best to continue them. I am sure if they do their Duty, as I don't doubt they will, they will save ten Times more than their Wages ; especially as it will be out

of my Power to do my own Duty and attend particularly to that Part of the Business.

“ The Bearer, Capt. Bedlow, who will wait your Answer and bring down such of the wanted Articles as you can furnish us with, will inform you of the Scandalous Manner some of the Militia left this Place, without returning the Ammunition or other Public Stores they had been furnished with.

“ Mr. Livingston gave me Reason to hope I should have three Companies of Rangers join me ; I wish to have them, as we shall want all the Aid the Convention can give us, and I have a strong desire to Work those Gentry a little. If they should object against going out of their County, as I have heard they do, I'll fix them in it. They will be equally convenient to the Work.

“ I am with due respect,

“ Your most obt. Servt.,

“ GEO. CLINTON.

“ To the Honorable the President of the Convention, of the State of New York.”

110 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

“Pollopen’s Island, fix thousand Bricks for Forges
“for Blacksmith’s Shops; and a few Ovens to
“bake Bread in for the Soldiers. The Logs at
“Poughkeepsie ought to be brought down,” &c.

At a Meeting of the Convention held Jan. 6th,
1777, the following Resolution was passed :

“*Resolved*, That Capt. Machin be empowered,
“with the Advice and under the Direction of Gen.
“George Clinton,¹ to employ such and so many

¹ GEORGE CLINTON was the youngest Son of Col. Charles Clinton, and was born in Ulster County, now Orange, July 26, 1739. He was named after the Colonial Governor, a Friend of his Father. In his Education his Father was assisted by Daniel Thain, a Minister from Scotland. In early Life he evinced the enterprise which distinguished him afterwards. He once left his Father’s House and sailed in a Privateer. On his Return he accompanied as a Lieutenant his Brother, James, in the Expedition against Fort Frontenac, now Kingston. He afterwards studied Law under William Smith, and rose to some Distinction in his native County. As a Member of the Colonial Assembly in 1775 and afterwards, he was a zealous Whig. May 15, 1775, he took his Seat as a Member of Congress. He voted for the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776; but, being called away by his appointment as

Brigadier General before the Instrument was ready for the Signature of the Members, his Name is not attached to it. March 25, 1777, he was appointed Brigadier General of the United States. At the first Election under the Constitution of New York, he was chosen, April 20, 1777, both Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Accepting the former office, the latter was filled by Mr. Van Cortlandt. He was thus elected Chief Magistrate six successive Periods, or for eighteen Years, till 1795, when he was succeeded by Mr. Jay. Being at the Head of a Powerful State, and in the command of the Militia, his Patriotic Services were of the highest importance to his Country. On the advance of the Enemy up the Hudson in Oct., 1777, he Prorogued the Assembly and proceeded to take command of Fort Montgomery, where he and his Brother James made a most gallant Defence Oct. 6th. He escaped under cover

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. III

“Laborers and Artificers as will be sufficient to perfect the Obstructions in Hudson's River, and to lay out and erect such Works as will be necessary for the Defence thereof.”

The Works here referred to were evidently those at Plumb Point, remains of which, in a remarkable state of Preservation, still exist on the Property of P. A. Verplanck, Esq., New Windsor.

of the Night. The next Day Forts Independence and Constitution were evacuated. He presided in the Convention at Poughkeepsie, June 17, 1788, for deliberating on the Federal Constitution, which he deemed not sufficiently guarded in favor of the Sovereignty of each State. After being five Years in Private Life, he was elected to the Legislature. Again in 1801 was he chosen Governor, but in 1804 was succeeded by Mr. Lewis. In that Year he was elevated to the Vice Presidency of the United States, in which Station he continued till his Death. It was by his casting Vote that the Bill for renewing the Bank Charter was negatived. In Private Life he was frank, amiable, and warm in Friendship. By his Wife, Cornelia Tappan, of Kingston, he had one Son and five Daughters. He died at Washington April 20, 1812, aged 72. An Oration on his Death was delivered by Gouverneur Morris.

Of his Energy and Decision the following are Instances. At the

Conclusion of the War, when a British Officer was placed on a Cart in the City of New York, to be tarred and feathered, he rushed in among the Mob with a drawn Sword and rescued the Sufferer. During the raging of what was called the Doctor's Mob, when, in Consequence of the Disinterment of some Bodies for Dissection, the Houses of the Physicians were in Danger of being pulled down, he called out the Militia and quelled the Turbulence. The following is an Instance of the Skill with which he diverted Attention from his growing Infirmities. On a visit to Pittsfield, as he was rising from a Dinner Table in his old Age, he fell, but was caught by a Lady sitting next to him. “Thus,” said he, “should I ever wish to fall—into the Hands of the Ladies.” For many Years he suffered much by the Rheumatism. (*Delaplaine's Repository; Encyclopedia Americana; Almon's Remembrancer*, 1780, 160; See Street's *Council of Revision*).

We have no further recorded Action in reference to the Obstructions until the 12th of March, 1777, when a Committee, appointed for that purpose, reported to the Convention that they had

“Waited upon Gen. Geo. Clinton, and were informed by him that the Obstruction of the Navigation is in great forwardness; a number of Frames and Blocks are ready for sinking,” &c., and that “those Works will be completed by the Middle of April.”

At the Meeting of the Convention held April 26, 1777, two thousand Pounds were appropriated “for the use of the Works carrying on to Obstruct the Navigation in Hudson’s River near Pollopel’s Island.”

We find nothing showing the precise Time at which the *Chevaux-de-Frise* were placed in the River. That a Portion of them were there when the Expedition under Vaughan¹ and Wallace passed

¹ JOHN VAUGHAN, K. B., was Son of the Second Lord Lisburne, of the Peerage of Ireland. He entered the Army in 1748, and became Captain in the 17th Regiment of Foot in 1756; Lieutenant Colonel unattached in January, 1760, and was appointed to the 46th or South Devonshire Regiment of Foot, serving in America, in November, 1762, of which Regiment he was commissioned Colonel, on 11th May, 1775. He was appointed Major General in America 1st January, 1776, and was second in command of the British Reserve at the Battle on Staten Island, on the 1st August of that Year. Maj. Gen. Vaughan commanded about 1200 Men who were directed to march towards Fort Clinton on the 6th Oct., and cover Corps under Lt. Col. Campbell. By the British Account, the Approaches to the Fort were through a continued Abbatis of near 400 Yards in

Chevaux-de-Frise at Pollopel's Island. 113

up the River is evident from the following in the Letter from Gov. Clinton to the Convention announcing the Reduction of the Forts: "As soon "as I find the Shipping are likely to pass the *Chevaux-de-Frise*, I will, by a forced March, endeavour to gain Kingston and cover that Town."

In a Letter dated Little Britain, Oct 12, 1777, Gov. Clinton says that the Enemy are destroying the Works at Forts Clinton and Montgomery;

Length, defensive in its whole Course, and exposed to the Fire of 10 Pieces of Cannon. (*Beatson*, iv, 236). On the 14th Oct. Maj. Gen. Vaughan, with a Body of Troops in Bateaux, escorted by Sir James Wallace's Squadron, proceeded up the River to Kingston, where they had been informed there were considerable Stores. On the 15th, finding that Trenches had been thrown up and every Disposition made to annoy them, Gen. Vaughan determined to attack them before they should have Time to strengthen their Works, or to collect Reinforcements. He therefore landed his Detachment, assailed the Batteries, and having driven the Americans from their Works, and spiked or destroyed their Guns, he advanced directly to the Town, at the Entrance of which he found a Body of Men, with Small Arms and Artillery, drawn up to oppose him. These he routed and seized their Cannon. On entering the Town his Men were fired upon from the Houses, whereupon he gave Orders to set the Town on Fire, and it was entirely consumed, together with a considerable Quantity of Military Stores. The American Shipping was also all destroyed, except an armed Galley, which ran up the Creek. Finding that a Junction with Gen. Burgoyne's Army was impracticable, the combined Armament returned to New York. (*Ib.*, 237-38). His Regiment formed part of the Expedition under General Grant to the West Indies in 1777, and he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in the Leeward Islands. In 1779, when the British passed the *Chevaux-de-Frise*, he invested Fort Lafayette, which surrendered on the 2d June in that Year. (*Ib.* 503-4). In 1781, he accompanied the Expedition against the Dutch West India Possessions. He was next appointed Governor of Berwick, and Lieutenant General in 1782. He died Colonel of the 46th Regiment, 30th June, 1795. (*N. Y. Col. Hist.*, vii, 749).

and, in a Postscript to this Letter, he says: “ Yesterday Evening an armed Schooner, two Row
“ Galleys and a small Brig passed the *Chevaux-de-*
“ *Frize*, and are out of Sight up the River this
“ Morning.”

But the Works were not entirely completed until the subsequent Year, as we find Gov. Clinton writing under date of Jan. 17th, 1778: “ I would
“ advise, that the *Chevaux-de-Frize* be completed
“ under the Directions of Capt. Machin, who has
“ hitherto had the Management of that Business.
“ He knows how many are yet wanted, and where
“ to be sunk, so as to perfect the Obstructions.”



V.
O B S T R U C T I O N S
AT
W E S T P O I N T .



THE
OBSTRUCTIONS
AT
WEST POINT.

THE Obstructions to the Navigation of Hudson's River at West Point, were placed there in the Spring of 1778. Immediately after the return of Sir Henry Clinton's¹ Expedition to New York, the more thorough Fortification of the Highlands was urged by Gen. Washington, who in a Letter dated December 2d,

¹ HENRY CLINTON, K. B., was the eldest Son of Admiral George Clinton, formerly Governor of the Province of New York (*New York Colonial Hist.*, vi, 475), and Grandson of the 6th Earl of Lincoln. He entered the Army early in Life, having been appointed during his

Father's Administration, Captain Lieutenant of the New York Companies. He became Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards 1st Nov., 1751; and was promoted to Captain of a Company in the 1st Foot Guards 6th May, 1758. (*Mackennon's Coldstream Guards*, ii, 487).

118 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

1777, instructed Gen. Putnam to consult with Gov. Clinton, Gen. Parsons, and the French Engineer, Colonel Radière, with a view to the Erection of such "Works and Obstructions as may be necessary to defend and secure the River against any future attempts of the Enemy." The following is Washington's Letter:

In 1762 he became Colonel in the Army, and of the 12th Regiment of Foot on the 28th November, 1766. After gaining great Credit by his Services during the Seven Years' War in Germany, he rose to the Rank of Major General 25th May, 1772, and in May, 1775, arrived at Boston. In June he distinguished himself at Bunker Hill, and was rewarded, on the 1st of September following, by being created Knight of the Bath and advanced to the Rank of Lieutenant General in America. On 1st January, 1776, he was appointed General in America, and was defeated that Year at Sullivan's Island; commanded the First Line of the British Army at Staten Island 1st August; on the 27th of the same Month, commanded a Division in the Battle on Long Island; in October, defeated a Portion of the American Army on the Bronx, in Westchester County; and in December, and against his will, was sent to take Possession of Rhode Island. In 1777, he was engaged in Operations on the Hudson River

for the Relief of Burgoyne; was appointed Lieutenant General in the Army in August, and in October was present at the Storming of Forts Montgomery and Clinton. In 1778, Sir Henry Clinton was commissioned Commander-in-Chief, and conducted the Retreat from Philadelphia to New York; was appointed Colonel of the 84th Royal Highlanders in December, of the same Year. In April, 1779, became Colonel of the 7th Light Dragoons, and in December embarked for Charleston, which he reduced. He was succeeded in the Chief Command by General Carleton in 1782, when he returned to England, where he published a *Narrative of his Conduct in America*, 1782; *Observations on the Earl Cornwallis's Answer*, 1783; *Letter to the Commissioner of Public Accounts*, 1784; and *Observations on Mr. Stedman's History of the American War*, 1794. He died 13th December, 1795. (*N. Y. Col. Hist.*, viii, 717).

¹ Sparks, v, 177.

“HEAD QUARTERS, 2 December, 1777.

“DEAR SIR :

“The importance of the Hudson River in
“the present Contest, and the necessity of defend-
“ing it, are Subjects which have been so frequently
“and fully discussed, and are so well understood,
“that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon them.
“These Facts at once appear, when it is considered
“that it runs through a whole State; that it is
“the only Passage by which the Enemy from
“New York, or any Part of our Coast, can ever
“hope to cooperate with an Army from Canada;
“that the possession of it is indispensably essential
“to preserve the Communication between the
“Eastern, Middle and Southern States; and fur-
“ther, that upon its Security, in a great Measure,
“depend our chief Supplies of Flour for the sub-
“sistence of such Forces, as we may have occasion
“for, in the course of the War, either in the East-
“ern or Northern Departments, or in the Country
“lying high up on the West side of it. These
“Facts are familiar to all; they are familiar to you.
“I therefore request you, in the most urgent
“Terms, to turn your most serious and active At-
“tention to this infinitely important object. Seize
“the present opportunity, and employ your whole
“Force and all the Means in your Power for
“erecting and completing, as far as it shall be
“possible, such Works and Obstructions as may be
“necessary to defend and secure the River against

“any future attempts of the Enemy. You will
“consult Governor Clinton, General Parsons,¹ and

¹ SAMUEL HOLDEN PARSONS, was born at Lyme, Conn., 14th May, 1737, and was graduated at Harvard in 1756; was admitted to the Bar in 1759, and settled at Lyme in the Practice of the Law; married in 1761; was Member of the General Assembly from 1762 to 1774, during which Time he filled various Appointments of Honour and Trust, among which was that of settling the Boundary of the Connecticut Claim on the Border of Pennsylvania. In 1773 he was appointed one of the Standing Committee of Correspondence and Inquiry with the Sister Colonies, of which he was an energetick Member, and originated the Suggestion of assembling the First Congress which subsequently met at New York; an Act which led to the Continental Congress, to the Confederation, and that great Chain of Events, connected with the War of Independence. In Nov. 1773, he was appointed King's Attorney. In 1775, he with a few Connecticut Gentlemen formed the bold Design, which was successfully executed, of seizing Ticonderoga and Crown Point, the first *offensive* Blow struck by the Colonies. He had been appointed Major of the Fourteenth Regiment of Militia in 1770, and on the 26th April, 1775, was commissioned Colonel of the Sixth Regiment, raised for the special Defence and Safety of the Colony, and soon after marched to and con-

tinued at Roxbury, until the British evacuated Boston, when he was ordered to New York. He was actively engaged at the Battle of Long Island, Aug. 1776. (See Botta; Williams's *Life Olney*; Stiles's *Diary*.) In Aug. 1776, he was appointed by Congress Brigadier General, and was with the Army at Harlem Heights, Kingsbridge, and in the Battle of White Plains. He was subsequently stationed at Peekskill with a Portion of the Army to protect the important Posts upon the North River, and from thence was frequently detached upon various Expeditions. In May, 1777, he planned the eminently successful and important Expedition of Col. Meigs to Saggs Harbour (Marshall's *Life Wash.*, III, 96), in June following reinforced Washington in New Jersey; and on the Retreat of Gen. Howe was detached to Peekskill, when, at his urgent Solicitation, the Highlands were strongly reinforced, but before effectual Measures were consummated, Gen. Clinton with a strong Force captured all the Defences and passed above the Highlands. In the Winter of 1777, suffering under feeble Health, and a Constitution broken down in the Service, Gen. Parsons expressed to the Commander-in-Chief a Desire to retire temporarily from the active Duties of the Army; but at the urgent Solicitation of Washington, he determined to continue at the

“ the French Engineer, Colonel Radière, upon
“ the occasion. By gaining the Passage, you know

Head of his Brigade. In the beginning of 1778 he took Command of the Troops stationed at the Highlands, with the additional Duty of constructing Military Works at West Point. In a Letter to Washington, dated 16th March, 1778, he says: “ I shall pay particular Attention “ to forwarding the Work of the “ Boats designed for transporting “ over, as well as to those which “ are to be employed for Defense “ on Hudson River. I have ordered all the Boats and other “ Crafts on the River to be collected “ in different Places, and put in the “ best possible State immediately. “ When I was last at Poughkeepsie the Gun-Boats were in such a “ State as to give Hopes of their “ being fit for Use within a few “ Weeks; and as Gov. Clinton has “ been kind enough to take upon “ himself the Direction of them, I “ think we may hope to see them “ completed soon. I will send to “ Albany, and know the State of “ the Boats there, and as the River “ will be soon Clear of Ice, I will “ order down such Boats and other “ Crafts as can be had there, fit for “ Transportation over the River. “ If the Chain is complete, we shall “ be ready to stretch it over the “ River next Week. A sufficient “ Number of the *Chevaux-de-Frise* “ to fill those Parts left Open last “ Year, are ready to sink as soon “ as the Weather and the State of

“ the River will admit it to be done.
“ I hope to have two Sides and one
“ Bastion of the Fort in some State
“ of Defence in about a Fortnight.
“ The other Sides need very little to
“ secure them. There is a Prospect
“ of having five or six Cannon
“ mounted in one of our Batteries
“ this Week. I think the Works
“ are going on as fast as could be
“ expected from our small Number
“ of Men, total Want of Materials
“ provided, and of Money to purchase them. We have borrowed
“ and begged and hired Money to this
“ Time. I have several Times advanced my last Shilling towards
“ purchasing Materials, &c.; and I
“ believe this has been the Cause with
“ almost every Officer here. As we
“ still live, I hope we shall accomplish
“ the Works in the River in Season,
“ if the Enemy move with their
“ accustomed Caution and Tardiness; when I hope Congress will
“ repay what has been advanced,
“ and cannot think us blamable if
“ we have been compelled to save
“ the Public Credit, and forward the
“ Business intrusted to our Care.”

From the above Correspondence it appears that the Fortifications at West Point, and upon the Highlands, were for a Time under the Superintendence of Gen. Parsons, where he was stationed the principal Part of the Years 1778 and 1779, but was frequently Detached upon Expeditions to protect the Sea-coast

“ the Enemy have already laid waste and destroyed
 “ all the Houses, Mills and Towns accessible to

of his native State, near Horseneck, Greenwich, New Haven and New London. Time and Space, however, will not permit a full Statement of his Services. It appears, also, from his numerous Opinions, recorded and preserved among the Manuscripts of Gen. Washington, that he was frequently consulted in Questions of great Moment, and in critical Times of Publick Danger. In 1779, he was stationed opposite West Point with Instructions to assist in constructing the Works. In July of that Year, Gen. Tryon having invaded Connecticut with 2600 Men, Gen. Parsons, at the Head of 150 Continental Troops and the Militia under Gen. Wolcott, attacked the British on the Morning of the 12th July, soon after they landed at Norwalk, and although too Weak to prevent the Destruction of that Fort, he harassed the Enemy so much during the Day, that they retired for fresh Reinforcements, and finally abandoned the Undertaking of penetrating that State. On the 29th Oct, 1780, he was one of the Board which tried Major Andre; and in the same Month received from Congress a Commission as Major General, and succeeded Gen. Putnam in the Command of the Connecticut Line of the Continental Army. The defenceless Inhabitants between Greenwich and New York, having been much annoyed, and suffered

great Losses by the frequent Incurfions of Col. Delancy's Corps at Morrisiana, Gen. Parsons determined to destroy the Enemy's Barracks, which could not be rebuilt during the Winter; and thus afford some Protection to the Inhabitants in that Vicinity. For this Purpose, he advanced, with rapid Marches, to West Chester and Morrisiana, with a few Continentals, attacked the British Troops, and effectually accomplished his Object. Congress now passed a Resolution directing Gen. Washington to present to Gen. Parsons and the Officers under his Command, the Thanks of Congress for his judicious Arrangements, and for the Courage displayed by the Officers and Men. In the Year 1781, he was appointed by the Governor and Council of Connecticut to command the State Troops and Coast Guards, raised for the Protection of the State, and to dispose them in such Manner as he should judge expedient to protect the Inhabitants from the Incurfions of the Enemy on the Sea-coast. At the Close of the War he resumed the Practice of the Law in Middletown, whither his Family had been removed during the Revolution, and frequently represented that Town in the Legislature. In the Prosecution of Measures for the Formation of Middlesex County, he was more engaged and more influential than any other Man. He was an active

“ them. Unless proper Measures are taken to prevent them, they will renew their Ravages in the Spring, or as soon as the Season will admit, and

and influential Member of the State Convention which assembled at Hartford, January, 1781, and adopted the Constitution of the United States. He was a Member and for some Time President of the Society of Cincinnati, in Connecticut. In the latter Part of the Year 1785, he was appointed by Congress, a Commissioner, in Connection with Gens. Richard Butler of Pittsburg, and George Rogers Clarke of Kentucky, to treat with the Shawanoe Indians, near the Falls of Ohio, for extinguishing the Aboriginal Title to certain Lands within the Northwestern Territory. This Treaty was held on the northwestern Bank of the Ohio, near the Mouth of the Great Miama, January 31st, 1786, and the Indians then ceded to the United States a large and valuable Tract upon which the flourishing City of Cincinnati now stands. Under the Ordinance of Congress of 1787, he was appointed Judge in and over the Territory of the United States northwest of the River Ohio. The Commission is dated October 23d, 1787, and signed by Arthur St. Clair, President, and Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress. In 1789, he was nominated by Gen. Washington, by and with the Consent of the Senate, Chief Judge in and over the same Territory, then embracing the present States of

Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan, which Office he held until his Death. In 1789, he was appointed by the State of Connecticut a Commissioner, with Gov. Wolcott, and Hon. James Davenport, to hold a Treaty with the Wyandots and other Tribes of Indians for extinguishing their Claim to the Lands called the Connecticut Western Reserve, and in the Fall of 1789 he visited that Country with a View to preliminary Arrangements for holding a Treaty with them. While returning to his Residence at Marietta, he was drowned in descending the Rapids of the Big Beaver River, the 17th of November, 1789, aged fifty-two years. Among the Manuscripts of Gen. Parsons in the Possession of his Grandson, Samuel H. Parsons, of Middletown, are a Journal of Observations and Occurrences when he first visited the Western Country; a Communication to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in October, 1786, describing the Western Mounds, Manners and Customs of the Aborigines; Original Address to the Shawanoe Tribes; besides a voluminous Correspondence before, during, and after the Revolutionary War, with the distinguished Men of that Period. (*Hildreth's Lives of the Early Settlers of Ohio; N. E. Hist. Gen. Register, etc.*)

“ perhaps Albany, the only Town in the State of
 “ any importance remaining in our Hands, may
 “ undergo a like Fate, and a general Havoc and
 “ Devastation take place.

“ To prevent these Evils, therefore, I shall ex-
 “ pect that you will exert every Nerve, and employ
 “ your whole Force in Future, while and when-
 “ ever it is practicable, in constructing and for-
 “ warding the proper Works and Means of Defence.
 “ The Troops must not be kept out on Command,
 “ and acting in Detachments to cover the Country
 “ below, which is a Consideration infinitely less
 “ important and interesting.

“ I am, Dear Sir, &c.”

In a Letter to Gov. Clinton of the same Date, Gen. Washington expressed much Solicitude on the Subject. Gov. Clinton, in Reply, assured the Commander-in-Chief of his hearty Concurrence in any Effort that might be agreed upon; and he gave several important Hints respecting the Construction of new Works on the River, and especially recommended, that a “ strong Fortress should be erected at West Point opposite to Fort Con-
 “ stitution.”¹

On the same date, Washington also addressed a Letter to Major General Gates, directing him,

¹ This was probably the first Place had been discussed at the Suggestion, from any official Source, Time of agreeing to the Construction of Forts Montgomery and which led to the Fortification of Clinton. the Plan of Fortifications at that

“ with a certain Part of the Northern Army and
“ the Assistance of the Militia of New York and
“ the Eastern States, to attempt the Recovery of the
“ Posts upon the North River from the Enemy,
“ and to put them if recovered in the best
“ Posture of Defence.” But Gen. Gates was appointed, at about the same Time, President of the Board of War, and did not act in the Matter. Washington also addressed a Letter to Gov. Clinton requesting him “ to take the Chief Direction
“ and Superintendence of this Business.” Gov. Clinton replied that he would coöperate with any one charged with the Chief Direction of the Works, but in Consideration of his other Duties must decline the Appointment.

The Matter thus remained under the Direction of Gen. Putnam, who, early in January, 1778, brought the Subject before the Provincial Convention of New York, as appears from the following Proceedings:

“ THURSDAY, Jan. 8, 1778:

“ Application being made by Major General
“ Putnam, Commanding Officer of the Middle
“ Department, that this Convention would appoint
“ a Committee to confer with him relative to the
“ necessary Works to be constructed for the Defences of the Passes in the Highlands.

“ *Resolved*, That the General's request be complied with, and that Mr. Scott, Mr. Pawling,
“ Mr. Wifner, Mr. Snyder, Mr. Killian Van

“Renffelaer, Mr. Drake, Mr. Hathorn, and Mr. Hoffman, be a Committee for that Purpose.”¹

“FRIDAY, Jan. 9, 1778.

“General Scott, from the Committee appointed Yesterday Evening, to confer with Gen. Putnam and Gen. James Clinton, the Lieutenant Colonel of Engineers and other Military Officers, relative to the necessary Works to be constructed for the Passes in the Highlands, and the Place or Places where the same ought to be erected, reported that they had conferred with the said Generals and other Officers; that on such Conference there was a disagreement in Sentiment between those Gentlemen (arising from certain different Facts alleged), as to the place where such Works ought to be erected; and, therefore, that it was the Opinion of the said Committee and the Military Gentlemen, that this Convention appoint Commissioners to view the several Passes on Hudson River, with the Generals and other Officers, and advise in fixing the places where such Fortifications should be erected.

“*Resolved*, That John Sloss Hobart, Esq.,² one

¹ Jour. Prov. Con., 1113.

² JOHN SLOSS HOBART was born in Fairfield, Conn., February, 1738, and was graduated at Yale College, 1757; joined the Sons of Liberty in New York in Nov., 1765, which were organized to op-

pose the Execution of the Stamp Act; in 1775 was Member of the Provincial Convention from Suffolk County, and was Deputy from the same County to the Provincial Congress held in 1775 and 1776, also to the Convention of Representatives in 1777, which formed

“ of the Justices of the Supreme Court, the Hon.
“ Robt. R. Livingston,¹ Chancellor of this State,

the first Constitution of the State; on the 8th May, 1777, was appointed one of the Puisne Judges of the Supreme Court; 23d October, 1779, was placed by the Legislature upon the Council to carry on the Government of the State in the Southern Portion thereof, during the Interval between the Enemy's Abandonment of the District and the Meeting of the Legislature. In 1788 he was a Member of the Convention which ratified the Constitution of the United States; on the 11th Jan., 1798, was appointed United States Senator to succeed Gen. Schuyler, and having attained the age of 60 resigned the Office of Judge of the New York Supreme Court, and also the same Year his Senatorship, on being appointed Judge of the United States District Court for New York; which Office he held at the Time of his Death, 4th Feb., 1805. (See Street's *Council of Revision*, p. 177.)

¹ ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON was born Nov. 27, 1747, and graduated at King's College, New York, in 1765. After completing his Law Studies with William Smith, he was appointed by Gov. Tryon, Recorder of the City; which Office he resigned at the beginning of the Revolution. In April, 1775, he was elected to the Assembly from Dutchess County. In 1776 he

was a Member of Congress, and was placed on the Committee with Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, and Sherman, to whom was delegated the Task of Draughting the Declaration of Independence. He was also on other important Committees. In August, 1781, he was appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and commenced his Duties October 20. The Foreign Business of Congress had previously been conducted by the Committee of Secret Correspondence. Domestick Affairs were also in part intrusted to him. He was diligent, prompt, and energetic. His valuable Correspondence has been published in the *Diplomatick Correspondence* edited by Jared Sparks. On his Resignation in 1783 he received the Thanks of Congress. Under the new Constitution of New York, which, as Chairman of the Committee, he assisted in forming, he was appointed Chancellor, and filled that Situation until 1801. In 1788 he was Chairman of the State Convention, which adopted the Federal Constitution; at that Time uniting his Efforts with those of Jay and Hamilton. In 1794 he declined the Appointment of Minister to France, offered by Washington. In 1801 he accepted the Office of Minister Plenipotentiary to France, and proceeded to Paris. He was received with respect by the First

128 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

“ Mr. Platt, Mr. Wisner, and Colonel Hathorn be,
 “ and hereby are, appointed Commissioners for the
 “ Purpose above mentioned, and proceed on that
 “ Business with all possible Despatch.”¹

This Committee reported, as follows :

“ WEDNESDAY, Jan. 14, 1778.

“ Your Committee, who were sent to ascertain
 “ the Place for fixing a Chain and erecting Forti-
 “ fications for Obstructing the Navigation of Hud-
 “ son’s River, beg Leave to report: That they
 “ have carefully viewed the Ground on which Fort
 “ Clinton lately stood and its Environs, and find
 “ that the Ground is so intersected with long deep
 “ Hollows, that the Enemy might approach with-
 “ out any Annoyance from the Garrison within the
 “ Fort, to within a few Yards of the Walls, unless
 “ a Redoubt should be raised to clear the Hollows
 “ next the Fort, which must be built at such

Consul, and after his Mission had closed, Napoleon presented to him a splendid Snuff-Box, containing a Miniature of himself, by Isabey. With the assistance of Mr. Monroe he made the very important Purchase of Louisiana for \$15,000,000. In Paris he formed an Intimacy with Robert Fulton, whom he assisted by his Counsels and Money. After his Resignation, and the Arrival of General Armstrong, his Successor, he travelled through Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, and returned to America, in June, 1805. He

died in 1813, aged 66. He was instrumental in the Introduction of Steam Navigation into the United States; introduced the Merino Sheep, and the Use of Gypsum into New York; was President of an Agricultural Society; and also President of the Academy of the Fine Arts. A more circumstantial Account of the Events of his Life is given in Street’s *Council of Revision*, 149-59.”

¹ Jour. Pro. Conv., 1113.

“ Distance from the Fort that it could not be supported from thence in case of an Assault, so that
“ the Enemy might make themselves Masters of
“ the Redoubt the first Dark Night after their
“ landing, which would be a good Work, ready to
“ their Hand for annoying the Fort and facilitating
“ their operations against it; and, together with
“ the Eminences and broken Grounds within a
“ short Distance of the Fort, would render it impossible for the Garrison to resist a general Assault for many Hours together. Another objection that appeared to the Committee was the
“ want of Earth on the Spot, which would reduce
“ the Engineer to the necessity of erecting his
“ Works entirely of Timber, which must be
“ brought to Pooploop’s Kill in Rafts, and from
“ thence drawn up a steep and difficult Road to the
“ top of the Hill. The Rafts cannot be made till
“ the Water is warm enough for Men to Work
“ in it, by which it is probable that a Fort cannot
“ be erected before the Ships of the Enemy will
“ come up the River. Beside, at this Place, the
“ Chain must be laid across the River so that it
“ will receive the whole Force of the Ships coming
“ with all the strength of Tide and Wind, on a
“ line of three or four miles. Add to these, if the
“ Enemy should be able to possess themselves of the
“ Passes in the Mountains through which they
“ marched to the Attacks of Forts Montgomery
“ and Clinton, it would be extremely difficult, if

“ not impossible, for the Militia of the Country to
 “ raise the Siege.

“ Upon viewing the Country at and about West
 “ Point, the Committee found that there were
 “ several places at which the Enemy might land
 “ and proceed immediately to some high Grounds
 “ that would command a Fort erected at West
 “ Point at the distance of six or seven hundred
 “ yards, from which they might carry on their ap-
 “ proaches through a light Gravelly Soil, so that it
 “ would be impossible for the Fort to stand a long
 “ Siege. But to balance this disadvantage in this
 “ Place, there is plenty of Earth. The Timber
 “ may be brought to the Spot by good Roads from
 “ the high Grounds at the distance of one to three
 “ miles. Three hundred feet less of Chain will be
 “ requisite at this Place than at Fort Clinton. It
 “ will be laid across in a place where Vessels going
 “ up the River most usually lose their Headway.¹
 “ Water Batteries may be built on both sides of the
 “ River for protecting the Chain and annoying the
 “ Ships coming up the River, which will be com-
 “ pletely commanded from the Walls of the Fort.
 “ There are so many Passes across the Mountains
 “ to this Place, that it will be almost impossible

¹ Those who are acquainted with the Place where the Obstruction was fastened to the Shore, will see the Force of this Description. A Point of Land here juts out into the

Stream abruptly and compels Vessels, sailing under even the most favourable Breeze, to make such Change in their Course as will materially lessen their Headway.

“for the Enemy to prevent the Militia from coming to the relief of the Garrison.

“From these considerations, the Committee are led to conclude that the most Proper place to obstruct the Navigation of the River is at West Point;¹ but are at the same Time fully convinced that no Obstructions on the banks of the River can effectually secure the Country, unless a Body of light Troops, to consist of at least two thousand effective Men, be constantly stationed in the Mountains while the Navigation of the River is practicable, to Obstruct the Enemy in their approach by Land.

“JNO. SLOSS HOBART,

“HENRY WISNER,

“JOHN HATHORN,

“ZEPH. PLATT.

“POUGHKEEPSIE, Jan. 14th, 1778.”²

By Direction of Gen. Putnam, Hugh Hughes, D. Q. M. G., visited the Sterling Iron Works³ of Noble & Townsend, on the 2d of February, and

¹ In Force's *American Archives*, Plans prepared by Bernard Romans are published, by which it will be seen that he first proposed fortifying West Point. His Plans, however, were not carried out at that Time, Forts Clinton and Montgomery having been completed instead. The Plates in the *Archives*, therefore, have no value as describing the Forts at West Point.

² Journ. Prov. Con. 1117.

³ The Sterling Iron Works are still in Operation. They are situated on the Outlet of Sterling Pond, about five miles Southwest of the Sloatsburgh Station, on the Erie Railway. They are owned by Descendants of Peter Townsend, and have now been in Operation about one hundred Years.

entered into a Contract with the Proprietors to Construct a Chain. This Contract was as follows :

“ Articles of Agreement between Noble, Town-
 “ fend & Company, Proprietors of the Sterling
 “ Iron Works, in the State of New York, of the
 “ one Part, and Hugh Hughes, D. Q. M. G. to
 “ the Army of the United States, of the other
 “ Part, witneffeth :

“ That the faid Noble, Townfend & Company,
 “ jointly and feverally engage to have made and
 “ ready to be delivered at their Works to the faid
 “ Hugh Hughes, D. Q. M. G. or to the D. Q.
 “ M. G. of the Middle Department for the Time
 “ being, on or before the firft Day of April next
 “ enfuing the Date hereof, or as much fooner as
 “ circumftances will admit, an Iron Chain of the
 “ following Dimenfions and Quality, that is, in
 “ Length five hundred yards—each Link about
 “ two feet long, to be made of the beft Sterling
 “ Iron, two inches and one quarter fquare, or as
 “ near thereto as poffible, with a Swivel to every
 “ hundred feet, and a Clevis to every thoufand feet,
 “ in the fame manner as thofe of the former Chain.

“ The faid Noble, Townfend & Company alfo
 “ engage to have made and ready to be delivered
 “ at leaft twelve tons of Anchors of the aforefaid
 “ Iron, and of fuch Sizes as the faid Hugh Hughes
 “ or his Succeffors in Office fhall direct, in writ-

“ing, as soon as the completion of the Chain will
“admit.

“In Consideration of which the said Hugh
“Hughes, in behalf of the United States, agrees to
“pay to the said Noble, Townsend & Company,
“or their Order, at the Rate of four hundred and
“forty Pounds for every ton weight of Chain¹ and
“Anchors delivered as before mentioned, unless
“the General Regulations on Trade, Provisions,
“&c., which are now supposed to be framed by
“Deputies from the United States shall be published
“and take effect before the expiration of four
“Months from the date of this; in which case
“the price is to be only £400 per ton for the said
“Chain and Anchors. The Payment, if demanded,
“to be made in such proportion as the
“Work shall be ready to be delivered, which shall
“be determined in ten Days after requisition made
“by a number of competent Judges, not less than
“three nor more than five, unconcerned with the
“Proprietors, or the Works, and if condemned, to
“be completed at the expense of the said Company,
“who are also to Repair, as aforesaid, all
“failures of their Work, whenever happening,
“whether at the Works or River, or in extending
“it across.

“The said Hugh Hughes also engages to procure
“of the Governor of this State, for the said

¹ Continental Money probably.

“ Noble, Townsend & Company, an exemption
“ for nine Months from the Date hereof, from
“ Military Duty, for sixty Artificers that are steadily
“ Employed at the said Chain and Anchors, till
“ completed. Agreeable to the said Exemption,
“ the said Company complying with the Terms
“ thereof; Providing also that the said Company
“ give the said Hugh Hughes, or his Successors in
“ Office, the Refusal, by Letter, of all the Bar
“ Iron, Anchors, &c., made at the said Works in
“ the said Term of nine Months, at the current
“ Price, unless what is necessary to Exchange for
“ Clothing and other Articles for the Use of the
“ Works.

“ It is also Agreed, by the said Parties, that if
“ the Teams of the said Company shall transport
“ the said Chain or Anchors, or any Part thereof,
“ to any assigned Post, they shall receive for such
“ Services the same Pay as shall be given by the
“ United States for the like; the Teams of the
“ Company being exempted from Impress by any
“ of the Q. M. G's Deputies during the space of
“ nine Months.

“ Lastly, the said Company engage to Use their
“ utmost endeavors to keep seven Fires at Forging
“ and ten at Welding, if assisted with such Hands
“ as are necessary and can be spared from the Army,
“ in case of their not being able to procure others,
“ the said Company making deduction for their
“ Labor.

“ In Witness whereof, the Parties have inter-
“ changeably Subscribed their Names this second
“ Day of February, one thousand seven hundred
“ and seventy-eight, and in the second Year of
“ American Independence.

“ PETER TOWNSEND,
“ In Behalf of Noble & Company.

“ HUGH HUGHES,
“ In Behalf of United States.

“ In Prefence of }
“ P. TILLINGHAST.” }¹

On the 13th of February, Gen. Putnam wrote
to the Commander-in-Chief as follows :

“ At my Request the Legislature of this State
“ have appointed a Committee to affix the Places
“ and manner of securing the River, and to afford
“ some Assistance in expediting the Work. The
“ State of Affairs now at this Post, you will observe
“ is as follows : The Chain and necessary Anchor
“ are Contracted for, to be completed by the first
“ of April; and from the Intelligence I have re-
“ ceived, I have reason to believe they will be
“ completed by that Time. *Parts of the Boom in-*
“ *tended to have been used at Fort Montgomery,*
“ sufficient for this Place are remaining. Some of
“ the Iron is exceedingly bad, this I hope to have

¹ Copy of Original in Clinton Papers, State Library.

“replaced with good Iron soon.¹ The *Chevaux-de-Frise* will be completed by the Time the River will admit of sinking them (Pollopel’s Island). The Batteries near the Water, and the Fort to cover them, are laid out. The latter is within the Walls six hundred yards around, twenty-one feet base, fourteen feet high, the *Talus* two inches to the foot. This I fear is too large to be completed by the Time expected. Governor Clinton and the Committee have agreed to this Plan, and nothing on my Part shall be wanted to complete it in the best and most expeditious manner. Barracks and Huts for about three hundred Men are completed, and Barracks for about the same number are nearly covered. A Road to the River has been made with great difficulty.”²

Having proceeded thus far, Gen. Putnam went to Connecticut, leaving Gen. Parsons in command; but, in the Absence of explicit Authority, the latter, at first, declined exercising any thing more than a mere Supervisory Power over the Works, and little Progress was made. Meanwhile the People of the Province, regarding the Works as

¹ By Reference to the Minutes of the Secret Committee of July 14, the Character of the Boom referred to will be explained. The whole Work and Plan, however, was changed by Capt. Machin. The Length of the Logs was re-

duced, so that each Log of the first Boom made three of the new, and the whole Arrangement of Chains altered, as will appear in a subsequent Part of this Article.

² Sparks, v, 225.-

really under Putnam's Command, became greatly incensed at the Delay,¹ and refused to render the necessary Assistance while he remained, even nominally, at the Head of the Department. Indeed, the Current of Publick Opinion² ran so strongly against Putnam that Washington appointed Gen. McDougall to repair to the Highlands and assume the Chief Command there, comprehending "the Forts among other Objects of his Trust."

Radière,³ the Engineer, too, feeling some Delicacy in pushing forward the Works in the irresponsible State of the Command, visited Congress, and resigned his Appointment. He was succeeded

¹ The Course pursued by Gen. Parsons has been made the Subject of Censure in several of our Histories, but, it is thought, very unjustly. (See Letters in Appendix.)

² PUTNAM suffered much in the Estimation of Residents in the Vicinity of Forts Clinton and Montgomery, and especially of those engaged in their Defence, for his Failure to render Assistance in Time to defeat Sir Henry Clinton. The old Story handed down from the Militiamen engaged in that Affair is, that Putnam was busily engaged in a Game of Chess with a beautiful Lady, who was a Tory in Feeling; and that when warned of the Expedition, he refused to leave the Game until it was too late. This Story added greatly to his Discredit.

³ LA RADIÈRE was one of four Engineers sent over from France by Franklin and Deane, and was employed by Order of Congress. He was opposed to the Erection of Fortifications at West Point, but was overruled by the unanimous Judgment of other Officers consulted on the Occasion, and Kosciuszko was appointed to succeed him. (Loring's *Field Book*, 1, 704.) Mons. de la Radière was appointed Lieut. Col. of Engineers 8th July, 1777, in Accordance with a Treaty made in France, 13th Feb. 1777; was promoted to the Rank of Colonel 17th Nov. 1777; retained in the Service 1st Jan. 1779; died in Service same Year; Benefits of the Resolution 10th April, 1780, extended to his Representatives 3d August, 1785. (*Journals Congress.*)

by Kosciuszko, who arrived at the Works on the 26th March,¹ Gen. McDougall arrived, on the 28th of the same Month, and took Command. Operations were at once resumed and pushed forward with Vigour.²

The Obstructions to the Navigation of the River, however, had suffered less Delay than the Forts. Gov. Clinton, in Accordance with his Promise to "render any Assistance in his Power," had exercised considerable Supervision over that Branch of the Service; and had directed Capt. Machin, who had been employed in completing the Obstructions at Pollopel's Island, to take Charge of the Obstructions at West Point also.³ The Links of the Chain were brought from the Sterling Iron

¹ "Mr. Kosciuszko," says Gen. McDougall, in a Letter dated April 13, "is esteemed by those who have attended the Works at West Point, to have more Practice than Col. Radière, and his Manner of treating the People is more acceptable than that of the latter; which induced Gen. Parsons and Gov. Clinton to desire the former may be continued at West Point."

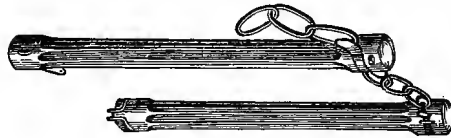
² On the Recommendation of Gen. Washington, Congress decided, on the 31st March, that all the Troops in the State of New York, should be under one General Officer who should be authorized to concentrate the whole Force in the Highlands until such Time as the

Fortifications and Obstructions should be out of Danger of any sudden Attempt from the Enemy.

³ Gov. Clinton, under Date of Feb. 13, 1778, thus certifies to Capt. Machin's Services: "I have Reason to believe, that upon his Recovery (from Wounds received at Fort Montgomery), he has been steadily engaged to this Time in the necessary Preparations for fixing the new Chain across the River, completing the Boom, the *Chevaux-de-Frise* (at Pollopel's Island), and in raising the Galley (the Washington) which was sunk (in Esopus Creek) on the Enemy's Advance up the River."

Works to Capt. Machin's Forges at New Windsor, where they were joined together and properly fastened to the Logs which formed the Support of the Chain when completed.

I. From the Facts stated, it is apparent that the Obstructions at West Point consisted of a Boom and a Chain. The former we find frequently referred to in the Papers quoted; and from the Portion of it which was recovered from the River by Bishop's Derrick, in the Summer of 1855, and which is now deposited in Washington's Head Quarters, at Newburgh, a satisfactory Description of it can be made.



The Relick here referred to consists of two Logs, one

of White Wood and the other of White Pine, about fifteen feet in length, and about twelve inches in Diameter, dressed in the Center in the Form of an Octagon, and rounded at the Ends. These Logs are united to each other by an Iron Band around each End and two Links of Chain of nearly two inch Bar Iron, but which have evidently lost much of their original Size from Corrosion. This Boom extended the whole Width of the River, *in Front of the Chain.* The Plan of its Construction is represented by the following Engraving :



A A Boom.

b b Iron Rollers for securing

140 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

It will be observed, that the Boom combined great Strength¹ with Practicability. It was, indeed,

¹ The Strength of this Boom may be inferred from the Bill of Noble & Townsend, which specifies 135 tons wrought into Booms, Bolts, Clips, Chains, Swivels and Bands, the very Articles of which the Relicks are composed which were recovered, and, it is found, charged separately from the Items which composed the Chain. Its Construction was evidently commenced with the Intention of employing it at Fort Montgomery, as a Substitute for the Rafts of Timber which were placed in Front of the Chain at that Place. (See

Letter of General Putnam, *ante.*) The annexed Bill of Noble, Townsend & Co., it will be seen, commences before the Reduction of Fort Montgomery, and closes before the Contract was made for the Chain. By the Bill of Capt. Machin, which is also annexed, it will be observed that he calls the Boom *Chain Logs*, and that they were taken to West Point on that Day, April 7. The Chain ("all fixed," see his Letter) appears from the same Bill to have been taken down on the 16th April, and stretched across the River on the 30th.

Quarter Master General by Messieurs THOMAS MACHIN and JOHN NICOLL.
TO NOBLE AND TOWNSEND DR.

1777.	No. Clips.	No. Chains	No. Swivels.	No. Clevices.	No. Bolts.	No. Bands.	By whom sent.
Aug. 6.	24		6		24		Daniel McCoun.
" 21.	24		6		24		Francis Welding.
" "	20		5		20		Amos Mills.
" 23.			3	6	6	6	Francis Welding,
Sept. 2.	16	8			16		David Sutherland.
" 6.	12	6			12		D. McCoun as far as Thorn's.
" 17.	12	8			12		Partrick Sutherland.
" 25.	12	9			12	2	David Sutherland.
Oct. 2.		9					Daniel McCoun.
Nov. 13.	22		1	1	22		Solomon Curtis.
Still at Works.		18			36		And one Lod was sent by the Clove that I have not got the Number Clips, &c.
	142	58	21	7	184	8	

Chain at West Point.

141

the *Main Obstruction*, and was placed in Front of the Chain to receive the full Force of approaching Veffels.

The Wt is 17 Tuns, 10 C., 1 Qr. of Boome Iron, &c., at	£	s.	d.
140s, - - - - -	2453	1	3
To Making 29,249 lb. Clips, Chains, &c., at 1s 3d, - -	2453	1	3
June 19. To 20 o o Bar Iron by my Team at 140s, -	140	0	0
“ 24. “ 30 o 14 do do at 140s, -	210	17	6
“ 26. “ 20 o 4 do Col. Curlies at 140s, -	140	5	0
July 7. “ 20 o 0 do our Team at 140s, -	140	0	0
“ “ 8 o 14 do Sam. Brufter, at 140s, -	56	17	6
1778.			
Jan. 20. “ 10 o 14 do by Mandeville, at 330s, -	167	1	3
“ 28. “ 10 1 14 do do do -	171	3	4
“ Carting 78 of the Boome Bar Iron, - - -	12	16	0
	£5945	3	1
Augt. By Cafh paid Mr. Hawxhurst, ¹ - -	£500	0	0
Sept. 14. By Cafh, - - - - -	1000	0	0
Nov. 14. By Cafh paid Nathaniel Satly, - -	240	0	0
Feb. 2. By Cafh received by Col. Hughes, -	4027	0	0
	5747	0	0
Ballance due, - - - - -	£198	3	1

The United States of America To THOMAS MACHIN Dr. for Travelling Expenses and Money paid out in their service from January 1778 to Sept. 20 Agreeable to the Account here under. £ s. d.
 1778. Jan. 1. Exploring Hudfons River with 7 Men fix Days, 6 10 0

¹ WILLIAM HAWKHURST was a Hardware Merchant, doing Buſineſs in the City of New York. Peter Townſend of the Sterling Works married his Daughter. We infer from the following Letter, which is copied verbatim from the Original, that he was not much indebted to the Schoolmaſter for any thing in his Line; but, in thoſe Days, bad Spelling was not ſo much the Exception, as it is at preſent :

“ SCOTS TAVERN, 23d April, 1778.
 “ SIR : I am juſt now from Nobels at
 “ Sterling. The Chane is going on faſt.
 “ But the anchors (not) Owing (They
 “ ſay) to your Not Sending The wate of
 “ Them. I Hope you will forward your
 “ inſtructions on The Receipt of This, as
 “ There Cant be any Thing Don Till you
 “ Send The wate of Each pertickeler
 “ anchor. I am Yours Sir in Haft,
 “ WM. HAWKHURST.
 “ To Cp. Machen, Indian Eare.”

142 *Hudson River Obstructions.*

II. The Chain employed for Obstructing the River is amply described in the Contract with Noble & Townsend, already quoted, and by the

Jany	7.	Expences to PoughKeepse, - - - - -	1	10	6
do	12.	Expences at FifthKill four Days Detayned on the publick service, - - - - -	4	0	0
do	16.	Expences on the Road to Chester to agree for the New Chain 3 Days, - - - - -	3	12	6
do	20.	Expences Getting Timber for the Chain four Days, - - - - -	4	0	0
do	26.	Getting up Drift Timber, - - - - -	1	0	0
Feb'y	2.	Expences to New Burgh, New Malbrough and New Paltz 4 Days, - - - - -	4	4	6
do	2.	For Ten Quire of Paper, - - - - -	2	10	0
do	12.	Expences to New Paltz 3 Days, Hiring one Hand two Days, - - - - -	4	10	6
do	17.	Expences to West Point, - - - - -	0	12	6
do	24.	Expences when in perfute of Diferters, for Myself and Men, at McDondels, - - - - -	0	6	0
do		at Capt. Smiths, - - - - -	4	8	0
do		at Sidmans, - - - - -	5	10	0
do		paid Onderdunk to Carry a Letter, - - - - -	1	12	0
March	5.	Getting the Logs to Drye for the Chain at New Paltz, - - - - -	3	10	0
do	11.	Expences to Jews Creek, Plattor Kill and New Burgh, two Days, - - - - -	2	0	0
do	14.	Expences to West Pt, - - - - -	0	12	0
do	15.	Expences from West Pt, - - - - -	0	12	0
do	16.	Expences to FifthKill, PoughKeepse, New Paltz and New Malbrough, six Days, - - - - -	6	0	0
do	24.	Expences to FifthKill for Rigging, - - - - -	0	10	0
do	26.	Expences Down the High Lands Collecting Drift Timber, - - - - -	0	12	6
do	29.	Expences to West Pt, - - - - -	0	8	0
April	7.	Expences Getting Down the Chain Logs with 40 Men, 4 Days, - - - - -	6	0	0
do	12.	Expences to Chester, - - - - -	1	0	0
do	16.	Taking Down the Chain, - - - - -	0	16	0
do	19.	Expences to Jews Creek, - - - - -	0	10	0
do	26.	Expences to Sterling, - - - - -	1	10	6

Chain at West Point. 143

Portion now preserved at West Point. For buoying the Chain, a large Quantity of Timber was used, as appears from the following Extracts from Capt. Machin's Papers :

" Jan. 20, 1778—Expenses getting *Timber for the Chain*, four Days."

" Feb. 22d, 1778—We shall want a large quantity of *Timber for the Chain*, which cannot be got up the River on account of the Frost and when the Frost breaks up it will be too late for our Business."

April	30.	While Getting the New Chain across,	- - - -	0	11	0
May	3.	Expences when Reascending the Lady Washington				
		Galley at Kingston Creek, 20 Days,	- - - -	9	10	6
June	1.	Expences to Peeks Kill,	- - - - -	1	11	0
do	4.	Expences to PoughKeepse,	- - - - -	2	0	0
do	6.	Expences to FifthKill,	- - - - -	0	12	0
do	10.	Expences to Kingston,	- - - - -	4	0	0
do	19.	Expences to Peeks Kill with four men,	- - - -	2	0	0
do	24.	Expences to FifthKill with Ferrys,	- - - - -	1	12	6
do	29.	Expences to Pough Keepse and Ferrys,	- - - -	2	10	0
July	2.	Expences to FifthKill,	- - - - -	0	10	8
do	10.	Expences to Pough Keepse and Ferrys with four men,	- - - -	8	16	0
do	19.	Expences to Chester,	- - - - -	1	0	6
do	20.	Expences to Fifth Kill,	- - - - -	0	11	0
Augt	1.	John Buchanons Bill for Travelling Expences,	- - - -	5	1	0
do	2.	William McBrides Bill for Travelling Expences in				
		the Service of the States,	- - - - -	5	4	0
		Joseph Holsteds Bill for Travelling Expences in				
		the Service of the States,	- - - - -	3	6	4
do	7.	Expences to Pough Keepse,	- - - - -	2	0	0
do	20	Expences to Fifth Kill,	- - - - -	0	12	0
do		Expences to Wit Plains,	- - - - -	6	0	0

£126 1 6

“ March 5th, 1778—Getting the *Logs to dry*
“ *for the Chain.*”

The Chain was put together at New Windsor; floated down to West Point, and secured in its proper Place in the latter Part of April, 1778, as appears from the following Extract from a Letter from Gen. Clinton to Capt. Machin, dated Poughkeepsie, 3 May, 1778 :

“ DEAR SIR :

“ I received your Letter and am happy to
“ learn that the Chain is across the River, and that
“ you had the good Fortune to accomplish it so
“ expeditiously and so much to your satisfaction.”

The Chain, as it appeared when placed in its Position, is thus described by Doctor Thacher in his Journal :

“ It is buoyed up by very large Logs of about
“ sixteen feet long, pointed at the Ends, to lessen
“ their opposition to the Force of the Current at
“ Flood and Ebb Tide. The Logs are placed at
“ short distances from each other, the Chain carried
“ over them and made fast to each by Staples.”

A great Variety of Traditions have been repeated, historically, in reference to the Obstructions at West Point, and which may be fully explained when the precise Character of the latter is understood. For Example, Mr. Loffing, in his *Field Book of the Revolution*, says :

“He [Arnold] wrote a Letter to Andre, in a
“disguised Hand and Manner, informing him that
“he had weakened the Obstructions in the River
“by ordering a Link of the Chain to be taken out
“and carried to the Smiths, under a pretense that
“it needed Repairs. He assured his Employer
“that the Link would not be returned to its Place
“before the Forts should be in Possession of the
“Enemy.”

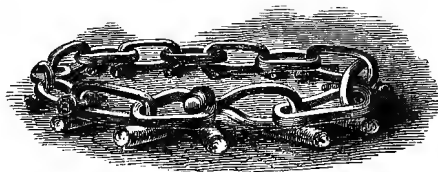
Arnold could not have taken a Link from the
Chain without removing that Part of the Obstruc-
tions altogether; but he could easily have weakened
the *Boom* by removing a Link from either Side,
Again, Mr. Simms, in a recent Letter to the Al-
bany *Argus*, says:

“Gov. Clinton is said, with Others, to have
“*walked across the River on the Chain*; and an
“old Gentleman by the Name of Wood, who a
“few Years ago was living at Springfield, Otsego
“County, assured me that *he* had crossed the River
“*on the Chain*.”

These Traditions are easily reconciled by substituting the Word *Boom* for that of *Chain*. The *Boom* could be readily converted into a Bridge; and it is not improbable that in its Construction, Reference was had to this Object, as it would afford Facilities for the transport of Troops from one Side of the River to the Other, the Absence of which had Contribut-

ed so much to the Loss of Forts Clinton and Montgomery. Another Writer affirms, that the Chain was removed every Winter "by means of a "large Windlass," and that it made a "huge Pile "on the River Bank." The simple fact in reference to this is, that one End of the Chain and of the Boom being loosened from its Fastening, a Windlass was employed to swing the Body around to the Shore, a very simple Process and easily accomplished.

But we will not pursue this Branch of the Subject farther. A large Portion of the Chain was sold to the West Point Foundry at Cold Spring, many Years ago, where it was worked up. In removing the *Boom* finally, a portion of it became detached, and the Logs being Water-soaked, sunk to the Bottom of the River, whence after being washed by the Tide for over eighty Years, they have been recovered; and now serve the noble Purpose of elucidating an important Branch in the defensive Operations of the Province of New York in the Struggle for Independence.



Relick of Chain preserved at West Point.

VI.

B E A C O N S

A N D

S I G N A L S .



THE
B E A C O N S
AND
S I G N A L S .

BEACONS were the rude Telegraphs of former Centuries, and were no unimportant Part of the Machinery employed in this Contest. In our Histories are many Allusions to the Beacon-Hills of the Highlands; Tradition also has handed down many Tales of the “Alarm-Fires that often gleamed on their Summits during the War.” So far as we have read, however, nothing really tangible has ever been published on the Subject. Revelling among the old Manuscripts at Head Quarters, we have found a few Items touching the Signals which were employed during the Revolution for convey-

ing Intelligence of the Approach of the Enemy and to direct the Movements of the Militia and Continental Forces, which we have thought of sufficient Interest to warrant their Publication in a durable Form.

On the 7th of October, 1775, the Continental Congress suggested to the Provincial Congress of New York the expediency of Adopting, in Connection with the Colonies of Connecticut and New Jersey, Signals for conveying Intelligence. The Resolution of the Continental Congress was as follows :

“ *Resolved*, That it be recommended to said
 “ Convention to Establish, at proper Distances,
 “ Posts to be ready to give Intelligence to the
 “ Country, in case of any Invasion, or by Signals to
 “ give Alarms in case of Danger ; and that they
 “ confer with the Assembly of Connecticut and the
 “ Convention of New Jersey, on the speediest
 “ Manner of conveying Intelligence in such Cases
 “ and receiving Assistance when necessary.”

In accordance with this Suggestion, the Provincial Congress of New York, on the 17th of Oct., 1775, adopted the following :

“ *Resolved*, That in Order to give a General
 “ Alarm throughout the Colony in case of Inva-
 “ sion, and for the purpose of mustering the Regi-
 “ ments aforesaid (Minute Men), that Beacons be

“ erected at convenient Places and Distances
“ throughout the Colony; and where convenient
“ Places cannot be found to erect Beacons, that
“ Cannon be fixed instead of them, and that some
“ fit Person be employod under the Direction and
“ with the Advice of the severall County Commit-
“ tees, to make a proper Arrangement for this Busi-
“ ness, and to report thereon to the Congress.

“ And for the purpose of conveying Intelligence
“ in case of Invasion, that it be recommended to
“ the severall County Committees in this Colony,
“ to appoint and engage some one or more of their
“ own Body (whose Place of Residence shall be
“ convenient for the Purpose, or any other discreet
“ Person or Persons who shall live on or near the
“ most Public Roads that lead from New York
“ through their respective Counties), to have a
“ Person and Horse in readiness to forward Intelli-
“ gence in case of Invasions, and that the Commit-
“ tees fix the severall Stages in their respective
“ Counties from 10 to 15 miles Distance.”

A Copy of the Resolution of the Continental Congress and also the Resolutions of the Provincial Congress were forwarded to the Assembly of Connecticut and the Provincial Congress of New Jersey, “ together with a Letter requesting their “ Advice on the Subject.” A Letter was also ordered to the Colonels of Militia and Minute Men, stating that, “ In order that timely Assistance may

“be had in case of an Invasion on this Colony,
 “Directions will be given by the Congress for the
 “Erection of Beacons at some and Cannon in other
 “Places of the Colony to alarm the Country.
 “These Signals, when erected, will be so arranged
 “as to prevent any Mistakes in the Alarm.” In
 reply to the Letter from the Congress of New
 York, Governor Trumbull, of Connecticut re-
 sponded; “Your Plan is approved by the Council
 “of Safety, and I am requested by them to procure
 “proper Persons to be in readiness at a Minute’s
 “Warning to carry any Intelligence of Alarm or
 “Invasion to the Towns where Occasion may re-
 “quire.”

This Plan was immediately carried into Effect,
 as appears from the following Paper enclosed by
 Gov. Tryon¹ to the Earl of Dartmouth, under Date
 of Nov. 11th, 1775, viz :

¹ WILLIAM TRYON received a Commission as Lieutenant and Captain of the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards 12th October, 1751 (*Army Lists*); in 1757 married Miss Wake, of Hanover Street, with whom he received a Fortune of £20,000 Sterling (*Gentleman's Magazine*, xxvii, 577), and on 30th September, 1758, became Captain and Lieutenant Colonel in the Guards. Through some Court Influence probably, (as we find a Miss Tryon Maid of Honor to the Queen (*Ib.* xxxi, 431), and he claimed Relationship with the Raw-

don or Moira Family), he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina, where he arrived 27th October, 1764, and, on the Death of Mr. Dobbs, was gazetted Governor of that Colony 20th July, 1765. (*Ib.* xxxv, 347). He administered that Government until July, 1771, when he was advanced to that of New York. He was promoted to a Colonelcy in the Army 25th May, 1772; became Third Major of the Guards 8th June, 1775; Major General 29th August, 1777, and Colonel of the 70th Regiment 14th May, 1778.

“ Hancock’s Letter to the Congress, says, ‘ I also
 “ enclose you a Resolve of the Continental Con-
 “ gress respecting those who in your Opinion are
 “ dangerous by going at Large, to which I also
 “ refer.’ This Resolve I can’t get sight of. I be-
 “ lieve it is destroyed. 150 Men working at the
 “ Forts, 200 weight of Powder there. Beacons to
 “ be erected 30 miles this Side of the Forts all the
 “ Way up at proper Places to give the alarm. A
 “ Plan is laid to build two more Batteries this Side
 “ of the Forts. An Application to Congress for
 “ 25 Men to keep Watch at Night, at the Forts
 “ building up the North River. A Plan to sink
 “ Blocks to stop up some narrow Places going up
 “ to the Forts, in order to prevent large Vessels
 “ going up.”¹

In the Spring of 1776, Gen. Washington ad-

In 1779 his Name was inserted in the New York Act of Confiscation. It is unnecessary here to speak of his Career in America, as that is already Notorious as it was Odious. He resigned the Government, for many Years only Nominal, of New York 21st March, 1780, and returned to England, where he was appointed Lieutenant General 20th November, 1782, and Colonel of the 29th Foot 16th August, 1783. Governor Tryon died at his House, Upper Grovesnor Street, London, 27th Jan. 1788, and his Remains were deposited in the Family Vault at Twickenham. A highly eulo-

gistic Obituary Notice of him, doubtless from the Pen of his Son-in-law Fanning, appeared shortly after, in the *Gents. Mag.* LVIII, 179. “ The Name of Tryon,” it asserts, “ will be revered across the Atlan-
 “ tick while Virtue and Sensibility
 “ remain.” The State of New York manifested its Reverence soon after by erasing the Name of Tryon from the only County that bore his Name in the State. (*N. Y. Col. Hist.* VIII, 798.)

¹ New York Colonial History, VIII, 615.

addressed the Convention of New York on the Subject, communicating the Plan which Gens. Sullivan and Green, and Lord Stirling¹ had suggested to him for conveying Intelligence of the Approach of the Enemy's Fleet, and suggesting that the Convention should employ the same in calling in the Militia under its Control. This Plan was as follows :

“To His Excellency Gen. Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the American Army :
 “May it please Your Excellency : In Obedience
 “to the Orders given us, we have met and deli-

¹ WILLIAM ALEXANDER, generally styled, through Courtesy, *Lord Stirling*, was born in New York City, in 1726, but passed a Portion of his Life in New Jersey. He claimed to be the rightful Heir to the Title and Estates of the Earldom of Stirling in Scotland, from which Country his Father came, though the Government refused to acknowledge the Son's Claim, when he repaired to Great Britain in Pursuit of his Inheritance. He was early remarkable for his Fondness for Mathematics and Astronomy, in which Sciences he made considerable Progress. He was Aid-de-Camp and Private Secretary to Gov. Shirley in the French War, was a Member of the Provincial Council of New Jersey, and on the Approach of the Revolution was appointed to the Command of a Regiment of Militia, and ultimately rose to the Rank of

Major-General. He acted an important Part throughout the War, and distinguished himself particularly in the Battles of Long Island, Germantown, and Monmouth. In the first he was taken Prisoner, after having, by a bold Attack upon a Corps commanded by Cornwallis, effected the Escape of a large Part of his Detachment. In the second, his Division, with the Brigades of Gens. Nash and Maxwell, formed the *Corps de Reserve*; and in the last, he commanded the Left Wing of the American Army. He was always warmly attached to Washington, and the Cause which he espoused. He died at Albany, N. Y. 15th Jan. 1783, aged 57, leaving behind him the Reputation of a brave, discerning and intrepid Officer, and a learned and honest Man. His Biography has been written by his Grandson, W. A. Duer.

“berated upon the several Matters referred to us
“by Your Excellency, and beg leave to Report
“that the following Signals be given upon the Ap-
“proach of any number of Ships toward this Port
“(New York), viz : Upon the Appearance of any
“Number of Ships by Day from one to six, a large
“Flag is to be hoisted over the Highlands of
“Neversink ; upon the Appearance of any Number
“from six to twenty, two Flags ; and for any
“greater number, three Flags ; the Flags to be
“hoisted upon Flag-Staffs arranged there from
“east to west at twenty Yards Distance from each
“other. The Signal by Night to be given by an
“equal number of Fires arranged in the same Order
“and at the same Places ; these Signals to be re-
“peated both by Day and Night on the Heights
“of Staten Island by Flags and Fire arranged in
“the same Manner. The Commanding Officer
“in each of those Departments to see that a good
“Look-out be kept for Ships both by Day and
“Night, and upon their Appearance he is not only
“to give the Signals before mentioned, but is as
“soon as possible to give Intelligence by Express
“to the Commander-in-Chief.

“We recommend that the Day Signal be given
“by large Ensigns with broad Stripes of Red and
“White, and that upon the Appearance of three
“Flags by Day or three Fires by Night, the
“Country is to take the alarm and communicate it

“ as soon as possible, for the purpose of calling in
 “ the Militia.

“ JNO. SULLIVAN.

“ NATHANIEL GREENE.

“ STIRLING.”

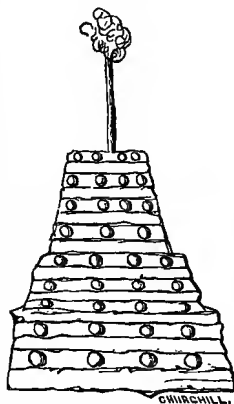
To this Letter the Convention responded that
 “ We have not been entirely inattentive to the Sub-
 “ ject of this Part of your Recommendation ; every
 “ Regiment of our Militia has its Place of Rendez-
 “ vous appointed, and Riders are fixed at the dif-
 “ ferent Stages in this and the neighboring Colo-
 “ nies, to alarm the Country in case of an Invasion ;
 “ but if upon consideration we shall judge that
 “ Signals may be of Service in calling in our Mili-
 “ tia more speedily than can be done in that Way,
 “ we shall communicate to you our own Determi-
 “ nation on that Head.”

We find no further Mention of the Subject in the
 Proceedings of the Provincial Convention. In
 1777, Lord Stirling, commanding at Albany, with a
 general Supervision of Military Affairs between
 that Place and New York, issued an Order for the
 Erection of Beacons and Alarm Posts in Accordance
 with the Plan which he had suggested to Wash-
 ington in 1776, above quoted. These Beacons
 were erected on the Hills from the Frontier Posts
 in Westchester to Beacon-Hill, and from thence
 diverged along the Hills east into Connecticut, and
 south and west through New Jersey by way of

Morristown, Pluckemin and Middlebrook, and to the Neverfink Hills at Sandy Hook. They consisted of Flags and Alarm Cannon by Day, and Fires and Alarm Cannon by Night; and were so arranged as to exhibit the Point where an Attack by the Enemy was expected. The following Description of the Manner in which the Beacon-Fires were made was copied from Stirling's original Order by Mr. Loffing, and is given in his *Field Book of the Revolution*, as follows :

“ Each of the Beacons are to be of the following Dimensions : at Bottom fourteen feet Square,
“ to rise in a pyramidal Form to about eighteen or
“ twenty feet high, and then to terminate about
“ six feet square, with a stout Sapling in the Centre of about thirty feet high from the Ground.
“ In Order to erect them, the Officer who oversees the Execution should proceed thus : he should
“ order the following sized Logs to be cut as near the Place as possible ; twenty Logs of fourteen feet long and about one foot Diameter ; two Logs of about twelve feet long ; ten Logs of about ten feet long ; ten Logs of about nine feet long ; ten Logs of about eight feet long ; twenty Logs of about seven feet long ; twenty Logs of about six feet long. He should then sort his longest Logs as to diameter, and place the four longest on the Ground parallel to each other and about three feet from each other. He should then

“place the four next Logs in size across these at
 “Right Angles, and so proceed until all the Logs
 “of fourteen feet be placed. Then he is to go on
 “in the same Manner with Logs of twelve feet
 “long, and when they are all placed, with those of
 “a lesser Size till the whole are placed, taking Care
 “as he goes on to fill the Vacan-
 “cies between the Logs with old
 “dry split Wood or useless dry
 “Rails and Brush, not too close,
 “and leaving the fifth Tier open
 “for Firing and Air. In the be-
 “ginning of his Work, to place
 “a good stout Sapling in the
 “Centre, with part of its Top
 “left about ten or twelve feet
 “above the whole Work. The
 “two upper Rows of Logs should
 “be fastened in their Places with good strong
 “Wooden Plugs or Trunnels.”



Here, then, were the Beacon-Fires which were lighted upon Beacon Hill and Butter Hill,¹ at the northern Entrance of the Highlands, and which Tradition tells us were responded to by Beacons on

¹ *Beacon Hill*, in Dutchess County near Fishkill, is 1685 feet in height. *Butter Hill*, the northern most Peak of the Highlands, is in the Town of Newburgh, Orange County, having an Altitude of 1529 feet. Mr. Willis has en-

deavoured to change the Name of this Eminence to *Storm King*, which should not be encouraged. Names hallowed by Historic Association, however homely and unpoetical they may be, should not be displaced by others of mere Fancy.

Mullender's Hill at Little Britain, and Snake Hill¹ just west of Newburgh, in the Vicinity of which Points the Militia and Portions of the Continental Troops were encamped.² As we have already stated, the Lighting of the Beacons was accompanied by the Discharge of Cannon. The following Copy of an Order issued by Gen. James Clinton, which was found among the Papers of Capt. Machin, by J. R. Simms, Esq., and published in his *History of Schoharie County*, shows the Manner of using the Beacons and the Alarm Cannon :

" HEAD QUARTERS, }
 " FORT MONTGOMERY, July 10th, 1777. }
 " The Signals to be given on the Approach of
 " the Enemy: On the firing of two Cannon at
 " Peekskill, by Gen. Varnum³ one Minute from

¹ *Snake Hill* is a rough, rocky Eminence in the northeast Part of New Windsor, Orange County, of about 600 feet Elevation above Tide Water. (French's *New York Gazetteer*, 509.)

² The Range of the Beacons in the Winter of 1779-80 may be ascertained from the Location of the Continental Forces. Washington's Head Quarters were at White Plains; seven Brigades were encamped at Middlebrook, N. J., nine Brigades on the west Bank of the Hudson, from New Windsor to Shawangunk, six Brigades on the east Bank of the River at Fishkill

and Vicinity, three Brigades at Danbury, Conn., and the Artillery at Pluckemin, N. J.

³ JAMES MITCHELL VARNUM was born at Dracut, Mass., 1749, and was graduated at Rhode Island College in 1769; was admitted to the Bar 1771, and settled at East Greenwich, R. I., in the practice of the Law; entered the Army 1775, and commanded a Regiment at Bunker Hill; was appointed Brigadier-General 1777; resigned 1779, and was elected to Congress same Year, and again in 1786; was appointed Judge of the North Western Territory 1787; died

“each other, two will be fired by Gen. Hunting-
 “ton,¹ two by Gen. Parsons; to be answered by
 “two at Fort Independence, two at Fort Mont-
 “gomery, two at Fort Constitution, *and the Bea-*
“con there to be fired as usual; to be answered by
 “two from the brass twenty-four Pounder near
 “New Windsor. Upon this Signal, the Militia on
 “west Side of Hudson’s River, in the County of
 “Orange and Ulster, as far as Col. Hasbrouck’s
 “Regiment,² including the same, are to march by
 “Detachments, without further Notice, as a Re-
 “inforcement of this Garrison, and the Militia on
 “the east Side of the River, as far up as Pough-

10th Jan., 1789, aged 40, terminating a remarkably active but brief Career. His Biography is sketched at length in Hildreth’s *Settlers of Ohio*, 165-85.

¹ JEDEDIAH HUNTINGTON was born in Norwich, Conn., 15th August, 1743; was graduated at Harvard 1763; entered the Army as Colonel of a Regiment 1775; was appointed Brigadier General May, 1777; was afterwards Aid to Washington; was Member of the Court Martial which tried Andre. After the War was Sheriff of his native County, and subsequently State Treasurer; and in 1789 was appointed Collector of the Port of New London, which Office he held until 1815, when he resigned. He died 25th Sept., 1818, aged 75.

² JONATHAN HASBROUCK was a Descendant of one of the first Huguenot Settlers of the Paltz, Ulster County. He removed to Newburgh in 1753, and, in 1760, was elected Supervisor on the Organization of the Town. At the breaking out of the War, he commanded a Regiment of Ulster County Militia, which at a previous Date he reported as consisting of 608, Officers included, divided into 11 Companies; “likewise 450 “Firelocks, 293 Swords, 188 Car-
 “tridge Boxes, 32 lbs Powder, and
 “120 lbs Lead. A true State of
 “my Regiment after the fourth
 “Man was selected as a Minute
 “Man.” His Place of Rendez-
 vus in Case of Alarm was the
 House of Martin Wygond in New-
 burgh. (*Four. Com. Safety.*)

“keepie, including Col. Frew’s Regiment, to
“march for the Reinforcing of the Garrison under
“Gen. Putnam.

“This Order is immediately to be published by
“the Commanding Officer at Fort Constitution,
“and Copies of it transmitted by him to Capt.
“Lieut. Machin, of the Artillery at New Wind-
“for, that he may cause the same to be published
“there.”

Of course there is no Record showing when these Signals gave their Warnings. They were first used, probably, when the English made their Approach on Forts Montgomery and Clinton, and afterwards as the Movements of the Enemy rendered it necessary. In 1779, the Beacons were discontinued, by Order of Gen. McDougall,¹ then

¹ ALEXANDER MCDUGALL, was, some say, a Native of Scotland; Allen says he was the Son of a Scotchman who sold Milk in the City of New York, and that he was not ashamed to acknowledge that, when a Boy, he assisted his Father. He became early an active Member of the Body known as Sons of Liberty, and was arrested in February, 1770, on a Charge of being the Author of the *Address to the Betrayed Inhabitants of New York*, and refusing to give Bail, was committed to Prison by Order of Chief Justice Horsmanden. His Friends represented his Case as simi-

lar to that of Wilkes. The latter had brought down the Vengeance of Government by the Publication of the *North Briton*, No. 45. This Number became the Watchword of McDougall’s fellow Patriots, and when asked their Names, on seeking Admission to their Friend, their Answer was: “We are forty-five;” and saluted their Champion with “forty-five” Cheers. In the two Months of his Confinement, he was overrun with Visitors. On the 20th of December following he was arraigned at the Bar of the Assembly on the same Charge, on which Occasion he was defended

in Command of the Forces in the Highlands, and the Alarm Guns and Express Riders only employed. The original Order of Gen. Clinton, made in Compliance with that of Gen. McDougall, on this Point, is deposited among the old Manuscripts at Head Quarters, in Newburgh,¹ and is as follows :

by George Clinton, afterwards the first Governor of the State of New York. A Writ of Habeas Corpus was sued out in the Course of the following Month, but without any Result, and Mr. McDougall was not liberated from his Confinement until the 4th of March, 1771, when the Assembly was prorogued. In March, 1775, he was a Member of the Provincial Convention, and was nominated as one of the Candidates for the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, but was not elected; in the same Year he received a Commission as Colonel of the 1st New York Regiment. He rose in 1776 to the Rank of Brigadier General, and in the following Year was present at the Battle of Germantown. In 1777 he was appointed Major General, and in 1778, superseded Putnam in the Command of the Highlands. After the Flight of Arnold, he was put in Charge of West Point on the 5th October, 1780. In the Year 1783, he was elected to represent the Southern District in the New York Senate, and continued a Member of that Body until his Death, which occurred in June, 1786. At the Time of his Decease, General Mc-

Dougall was President of the Bank of New York, and in Politicks adhered to the Hamilton Party. (*Leake's Life of John Lamb; N. Y. Col. Hist.*, viii, 213.)

¹ Overlooking the Hudson, in the south Part of the Village of Newburgh, stands an old Stone Mansion known as Washington's Head Quarters. It is surrounded by a fine Lawn of several Acres; and the whole Premises are owned and kept in Order by the State. The Building was commenced by Burger Meynders, one of the first Settlers of the Town, who sold it, in 1749, to Alex. Colden. Colden sold it, in 1753, to Jonathan Hasbrouck, and in his Possession and those of his Descendants it remained for nearly a hundred Years, and from this Fact it became known as the Old Hasbrouck House. Mr. Hasbrouck added the Kitchen on the south in 1760, making it a long, narrow Building. In 1770 he added the whole length of the west Side, and a new Roof was thrown over the whole. There are 8 Rooms on the first Floor, and from the principal Room eight Doors open, leading to every Part of the House, including

“POUGHKEESIE, March 18th, 1779.

“GENERAL ORDERS.—The Signal of Alarm
“being fixed by the Orders of the Honourable
“Major General McDougall, on the 19th Feb.
“last, are as follows, viz :

“When five Topsail Vessels appear coming up
“of the Enemy, three Cannon will be fired at
“King’s Ferry, five Minutes after each other ; and
“if ten Vessels appear, four Cannon will be fired
“at the same Distance of Time, and in this Man-
“ner if a greater number of Ships appear, that is
“one Gun for every five that shall exceed that
“number. These Signals will be answered by the
“firing of the heaviest Cannon at West Point in
“the same Manner.

“It is his Excellency the Governor’s Orders
“that the same be Communicated to the Officers
“of the respective Regiments of Militia of the

the Chambers and Cellar, while it has but one Window. This Building was used by Washington for his Head Quarters while the American Army occupied this Position upon the Hudson. It was purchased by the State in 1850, and is kept as nearly as possible in its original Condition. The Rooms and the Grounds are filled with Relicks of the Revolution and Mementos of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. The Walls of the Bedroom occupied by Washington are covered by Original Letters of Washing-

ton, La Fayette, and other distinguished Men of the Revolution, framed and glazed. Among the Curiosities are the Tables used by Washington and La Fayette. Part of the Boom which was stretched across the Hudson, and a great variety of Warlike Implements. Near the northeast Corner of the House is the Grave of Uzal Knapp, the last of Washington’s Life Guard; he died in Jan., 1856. (French’s *New York Gazetteer*, 509.)

“ Counties of Dutchess, Ulster and Orange, who are
 “ strictly charged to see their men are properly
 “ provided with Arms and Amunition and held in
 “ the most perfect Readiness: and that upon the
 “ Alarms being given, Col. Commandant Swart-
 “ wout’s Brigade will immediately march to Fish-
 “ kill, and there wait further Orders, and the Re-
 “ giments of Ulster and Orange (the Western
 “ Frontier Companies who are to attend to the
 “ Protection of the Frontier Settlements excepted),
 “ to the Post at West Point.

“ As the Signal Guns may not be heard but by
 “ the Regiments next contiguous to the Posts, the
 “ Officers of those Regiments are to communicate
 “ it by express to the other Regiments on their
 “ respective Sides of the River.

“ This is to be considered as a Standing Order
 “ until reversed; and as the Safety of the Country
 “ greatly depends on the spirited exertions of the
 “ Militia to reinforce the Continental Troops and
 “ strengthen the different Posts on sudden Emer-
 “ gencies it is expected that these Orders will be
 “ most faithfully complied with.

“ By Order of his Excellency

“ Governor Clinton,

“ ROBT. BENSON, A. D. C.”

The following Letter from Gen. Heath, in re-
 ply to an Inquiry on the Subject by Gov. Clinton
 (the Original of which is deposited at Head Quar-

ters in Newburgh), gives some Additional light on the Subject :

“ *To His Excellency Governor Clinton :*

“ HEAD QUARTERS,
“ Robinson House, Dec. 20th, 1779. }

“ SIR :

“ I have the honor to enclose and forward
“ your Excellency a Letter received this Morning
“ by Express from his Excellency Gen. Washing-
“ ton

“ I have not been able to give you a Statement
“ of the several Beacons, agreeable to your request
“ of the 2d inst., until now. Upon enquiring, I
“ found that the Guard at the one on Butter Hill
“ had been taken off for some Time. I could not
“ find by whose Order it was done until applica-
“ tion was made to Gen. McDougall, from whom
“ I learned that the Guard before mentioned was
“ taken off with the approbation of the Comman-
“ der-in-Chief. As this Beacon must give the
“ Signal to the others, the other Guards are ren-
“ dered of no Service. I have, therefore, thought,
“ as it will be extremely difficult and uncomfort-
“ able to continue Guards on the Tops of those
“ Mountains where the Beacons are erected thro’
“ the severe Season, and as there is little probability
“ of the Enemy making any considerable move-
“ ments during that Time, that the Guards in
“ general had best be taken off, if you coincide in

“ Opinion with me ; and that as soon as the Sea-
 “ son advances, when the Enemy may be appre-
 “ hended to be in Motion, the Guards should be
 “ again mounted ; or if any Intelligence before
 “ that Time should indicate the Enemy to have
 “ Intentions this way, immediate Attention should
 “ be paid to the Beacons. I cannot find, from any
 “ Intelligence yet obtained, that a Beacon was ever
 “ fixed at one of the Places you mention, viz: on
 “ Mullender’s Hill in Little Britain.

“ The Enemy undoubtedly are making a large
 “ Embarkation of Troops, if they have not already
 “ failed ; it is said at least 10,000. Forrage and
 “ Fuel are exceedingly scarce with them.

“ I have the honor to be

“ With great respect,

“ Your Excellency’s most obt. Servt.,

“ W. HEATH.”

It is probable that the Beacons were again employed in 1780, when important Movements were made by both the Enemy and the Continental Forces in the Vicinity of New York. We are told, that Arnold, when discovered going down the River in an open Boat, made the Excuse to Washington for his Conduct, that his Object was to “ establish Signals as near the Enemy’s Lines as possible, by which he might receive Information of any Movements of a Fleet or Troops up the Hudson.” If such was the Fact, how must those

Signals have flashed under the Hands of the stern Patriots when his dark Treachery was discovered. The whole Heavens glowed with the Insignia of Danger, and the Valleys rung with the reverberating Peals of Alarm Guns and the Clatter of the Hoofs of Express Horses, as Messengers sped on their Way to rally the patriot Forces to the Defence of the Gibraltar of the American Independence. From this Period, down to the Close of the War, comparative Tranquility rested around the Highlands; and the Beacon Hills were dark. The last gleaming Crowns which flashed on their Brows proclaimed the TRIUMPH OF FREEDOM.



A P P E N D I X .



A P P E N D I X .

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JAMES DUANE.

WAS born in the City of New York, 6th Feb., 1732-3, and adopted the Profession of the Law, which he studied with James Alexander, the Father of Lord Stirling. On the 21st Oct., 1759, he married a Daughter of Col. Robert Livingston. His Father left him a large Estate in Duaneburgh, Schenectady County, N. Y., which he increased by Purchases until he owned nearly the whole of that Township, and began its Settlement by a Company of Germans, in 1765. About the same Time he became the Owner of sixty-four thousand Acres of Land in Vermont. He was a Member of most of the Committees in the City of New York raised to devise Plans of opposing the British Encroachments, and was elected a Member of the first Congress. He set out for Philadelphia, 31st August, 1774, accompanied from his House to the Ferry by a great Procession; with Musick and Banners. The Congress adjourned on the 26th October, and the New York Delegates paid their own Expenses. In April, 1775, he was elected a Member to the second Congress. During the Recess of Congress, in August, he attended the Indian Treaty at Albany. He continued in Congress until 31st May, 1776, when he was called Home to attend the New York Congress. He took his Seat in that Body 2d June, but left New York on the 6th, having obtained leave of Absence to procure a Place of Residence for his Family; and did not again set his Foot in his native City until he entered it in Triumph, 25th November, 1783. The Convention also retired on the Invasion of the British Troops, and assembled at Fishkill, where Mr. Duane joined it on the 1st August. He was sent on the same Day, as one of a Committee to inquire into the State of Defence of the Forts-Montgomery and Constitution; continued with the Convention and the Committee of Safety at Fishkill and Kingston until 3d April, 1777, when he was directed to

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repair to the Congress at Philadelphia. He remained in Congress till December. During the Year 1778 he was detained at Home by Sickness. In 1779 he was engaged in collecting Evidence for New York in the Vermont Case. He was in Congress during a Part of the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782. On the Evacuation of New York he returned to that City, and found his Property very much dilapidated. He was appointed a Member of the Council for the Government of the Southern District of New York; also a Warden of Trinity Church (of which he had been a Vestryman before the Revolution), in which Office he continued during his Residence in the City. In December, 1783, he was elected State Senator, and on the 5th February, 1784, first Mayor of the City of New York. In 1788 he was a Member of the Convention which adopted the Constitution of the United States, and in the following Year was nominated by Washington and appointed District Judge of the District of New York. This Office he resigned on the 8th April, 1794, and retired from Publick Life. He settled temporarily in Schenectady, and erected a Church and began building a House for himself in Duaneburgh, but did not live to complete it. He died suddenly 1st Feb. 1797, aged 64, and was buried under the Church he had erected in Duaneburgh. (*N. Y. Doc. Hist.*, iv, 643-44; *Sargent's Loyalist Poetry*, 157.)

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WILLIAM DUER

Was a Son of John Duer, one of the King's Council for the Island of Antigua, and was born in England, 18th March, 1747. In his 18th Year he entered the British Service as Aid-de-Camp to Lord Clive, Governor General of India. On the Death of his Father, who left him a handsome pecuniary Legacy, besides an Estate in Dominica, he left the Army and repaired to the West Indies. In 1768 he visited New York for the Purpose of procuring Lumber for several Plantations, and to avail himself of a Contract to furnish the British Navy with Masts and Spars. He there became acquainted with Lord Stirling and Philip Schuyler, and by the Recommendation of the latter, purchased a Tract of Land, including the Falls of Fort Miller, in Washington County, N. Y., where he erected Saw Mills, a Grist Mill, a Snuff Mill, and ultimately a Powder Mill. And as he had resolved to make the Place his permanent Residence, he built a spacious and commodious Mansion. He had not long resided there, when he was appointed Colonel of the Militia, and a Judge of the County Court, Offices which he held until the Revolution. He was elected a Member of the Provincial Congress, and of the Provincial Con-

vention, and was a Member of the Committee of Publick Safety. When the State Constitution went into Operation, Col. Duer was elected to the Senate, but before taking his Seat in that Body, was chosen by the Legislature a Delegate to the Continental Congress. On the 27th July, 1779, he married Catharine, the eldest Daughter of Lord Stirling. On the Appointment of Lord Stirling as Commissary-General of the Northern Department, Col. Duer removed to Albany, where he remained until the Troops were withdrawn from the Northern Frontier, when he removed to Fishkill, where he remained with his Family until 1783. On the Evacuation of New York by the British Troops, he removed to that City, and made it his permanent Residence. He was appointed Secretary of the Board of Commissioners of the Treasury, which Office he filled until the Board was superseded by the Treasury Department. He was elected a Member of the State Legislature, in order to promote the Grant of the Impost Duties, as yet levied by the State, to Congress; and after the Adoption of the Constitution, was made Assistant-Secretary of the Treasury under Hamilton, in which Office he continued until the Seat of Government was removed to Philadelphia. He assisted in forming a Company for the Manufacture of woolen Cloths; and upon its Incorporation by the Legislature of New Jersey, he was placed at its Head; they erected the first Mill at the Falls of the Passaic, whence has arisen the flourishing Town of Paterson. At a later Period he established a Cotton Mill on the Bronx, in the County of Westchester, which is believed to have been the first in this Country. He also engaged in Contracts with the Government for furnishing the Western Army under Gen. Sinclair, during the first Indian War, with Clothing, Provisions and Military Stores. He also entered largely into Speculations in Publick Securities, and purchased extensively in the Military Tracts. But his Affairs reached a financial Crisis which proved fatal to his Fortune; his Property was sacrificed, and he remained for some Time without Resources for the Support of his Family. He died 7th May, 1799, aged 52. (*Knickerbocker Magazine*, xl, 95-103.)

Page 137.

During the Winter of 1777, General Samuel H. Parsons, suffering under feeble Health, and a Constitution broken down in the Service of his Country, expressed to the Commander-in-Chief a Desire to retire temporarily from the active Duties of the Army, but in Consequence of the urgent Solicitation of Gen. Washington, he relinquished the Desire, as may appear by the following Letter, dated

“HIGHLANDS, on Hudson River, 18th Feb’y, 1778.

Dear General: I had the Honor of receiving yours of the 16th of January about eight Days since at this Place, where I have returned to take Charge of my Brigade. In the present State of the Army, I shall continue in my Command, lest a different Conduct may prove injurious to the Cause of my Country, at this Conjunction of Affairs. However my Inclination may induce me to retire to the Enjoyment of domestic Happiness, I cannot think myself warranted to indulge my Wishes at a Time while so many Officers under my Command are desirous of leaving the Toils of War for the Pleasures of private Life.”

About this Time General Putnam went to Connecticut and left *West Point*, and all the Troops stationed at the *Highlands*, under the Command of General Parsons, to whom was delegated the additional Duty of *constructing Military Works at West Point, which had been delayed in Consequence of Misapprehension in Regard to the several Resolves of Congress upon the Subject*. It seems that on the 5th of November, 1777, Congress appointed General Gates to command in the Highlands, connecting that Post with the Northern Department, and empowered him to make Obstructions in and Fortifications on the Banks of the Hudson River, but as he was made President of the Board of War, he never entered upon these Duties.

Again, on the 18th of February, Gov. Clinton was requested to take the Superintendence of the Works, but the Multiplicity of his Civil Employments made it necessary for him to decline the Undertaking. Meantime, General Putnam went to Connecticut, and left the Post in Charge of Gen. Parsons, who entered promptly upon the discharge of his arduous and perplexing Duty.

In a Letter of 18th of February, to General Washington, he remarks: “Almost every Obstacle within the Circle of Possibility has happened, to retard the Progress of the *Obstructions in and Fortifications on the Banks of Hudson River*. Preparations for completing them are now in a State which will afford a good Prospect of completing them in April, and unless some Difficulties yet unforeseen should prevent, I think we cannot fail, by the Forepart of that Month to have them in a good Degree of Forwardness. Nothing on my Part shall be wanting to put them in a State of Forwardness to answer the reasonable Expectations of the Country, as early as possible.”

Again, in a Letter to Gen. Washington, dated Camp West Point, 7th of March, 1778, explaining the Perplexities arising under the Resolves of Congress of the 5th of November, and 18th February, in regard to Gen.

Gates and Gov. Clinton, whose Powers were deemed strictly *Personal*, he remarks :

“ In Gen. Putnam’s Absence the Command of the Troops devolves on me with all the Perplexities it is capable of being involved in. I find the Resolve of Congress of the 5th of Nov^r directing *the making Obstructions in and Fortifications on the Banks of Hudson’s River* and empowering General Gates to transact that Matter are personal to Gen. Gates, and give no Order or Authority to the Commanding Officer as such. By a Letter from your Excellency to Gen. Putnam of the 2nd Dec^r I find him directed to remove all the Troops from Out Posts or Commands and attend to fortifying on the River ; another of the 27th of December directs that small Parties patrol toward the Plains ; by a Resolve of the 18th Feby Congress empower Gov^r Clinton to superintend the Works and to call the Militia of New York, Connecticut, &c. for effecting the Purposes, and the *Commanding Officer at Peekskill* is ordered and directed to give him every Assistance in his Power in forwarding and perfecting the Business committed to him. Governor Clinton *does not choose to accept the Appointment*, but in this and every other Matter which will conduce to the Interest of the Country is willing to afford his Aid and Advice. From this State of Facts your Excellency will see the difficult and disagreeable Situation I am plunged into. The Country expect the Works to be completed as early in the Season as possible. The Powers given by Congress are *personal* only, and evidently designed to be so, and by the Resolves the Commanding Officer has no Authority to concern himself about it. Under these Circumstances I must entreat your Excellency’s Direction what I shall do. I most ardently wish to aid Gov. Clinton or any other Gentleman appointed to superintend the Work ; at present no Person has the Direction, I suppose it to be because no Man chooses to be responsible for the Post ; *I have kept the Troops at Work because I found them here when I took the Command*, and had not particularly attended to the Resolves of Congress concerning them ; I have given Orders and Directions, and caused Contracts to be made for completing the Works which I now find I had no right to concern myself about. Governor Clinton does not choose to give any Order about the Matter, lest he should be thought to accept his Appointment, and although I am conscious no Responce has been incurred by my Orders, but what was necessary, and the Works are carrying on by the Troops under my Command, yet as I now find I have no Authority for the Purpose, I do not think I have sufficient Power to justify me in giving further Orders whereby the Publick may incur an Expence, without some express Direction for it ; Indeed by continuing to do it, I put myself in the Power of any Man

who may choofe to facrifice me ; I am fully of your Excellency's Opinion that the Troops cannot be fo well employed in any other way as in perfecting the Obftructions in and Defences near the River and fhall continue them here until there is Time to receive your Excellency's further Orders.

By your Excellency's Letter of the 2nd of December, all the Troops are ordered here ; by the 27th, Part only are to be employed. By the Refolve of the 5th of November, as many as Gen. Gates fhall choofe to employ ; by that of the 18th Feby none but Militia. Whether your Excellency intends all the Troops to be employed in the Works or part only. Whether the Commanding Officer here fhall fuperintend the Works and hath difcretionary Powers to order and direct what he thinks neceffary without any Refolve of Congrefs for the Purpose, where no Perfon is particularly appointed for the Purpose, or when the Perfon fo appointed refufes to accept, are Questions which very much concern me at prefent, and which I beg your Excellency to direct me in. The Weather has been fuch fince the 15th of Feby as has greatly retarded us in the Works. About feven Days of the Time has been fuch that we could do nothing. *I fhall exert myfelf to have them in a State of Defence as early as poffible*, fo far as I can without any Power whatever, or by the due exercife of fuch Directions as your Excellency fhall pleafe to give me. Col. Radiere finding it impoffible to complete the Fort & other Defences intended at this Poft in fuch Manner as to effectually withftand the Attempts of the Enemy to pafs up the River early in the Spring, and, not choofing to hazard his Reputation on Works erected on a different Scale, calculated for a fhort Duration only, has defired leave to wait on your Excellency & Congrefs, which I have granted him. In Juftice to Col. Radiere, I ought to fay he appears to be a Gentleman of Science and Knowledge in his Profefion, and difpofed to render every Service he is able to do. I fhall with the Advice of Gov. Clinton expedite the Building fuch Works as are moft neceffary for immediate Defence."

To the preceding Letter General Washington replies as follows :

HEADQUARTERS, Valley Forge, }
5th March, 1778. }

"Dear Sir: I am favored with yours of the 18th Feby. I am exceedingly glad to hear your Determination to remain in the Army at this Time, when too many are withdrawing themfelves from the Service, and I am not lefs pleafed at the Account you give me of the *Progreff of the Obftructions and Fortifications in and upon the River*. I can only recommend your ftrictest Attention to a Work of fo much Confequence. I muft alfo defire that you will have all the Arms at the different Pofts in

your Neighborhood collected, and have those that want Repair put into the Hands of the Armourers at Fishkill, for I am certain when we come to draw our Force together in the Spring, that we shall want Arms, notwithstanding the considerable Importations. Col. Hay of Haverstraw informs me, that there is a large Quantity of Forage collected at that Place, which he fears will fall into the Enemy's Hands if it is not removed or a proper Guard sent over to protect it. As your Force will not probably allow you to do the latter with Convenience, I wish you would do all in your Power to effect the former. The Enemy, I should suppose, must be distressed for want of it, and when our Stores come forward in the Spring our Horses will stand in need of it. As Col. Hay complains of Gen^l Putnam's Inattention to this Matter when he represented it to him, I must beg you to see to it.

The Committee of Congress who are now here have desired that no Commissions be filled up till some new general Arrangements of the Army are completed. The Gentlemen will not loose any of their Pretensions to Rank, by waiting a little Time longer for their Commissions, which shall be forwarded as soon as the Business above mentioned is finished.

Col. Webb's Officers will take Rank from the Time he really appointed them. As I do not know when that was, he or Lieut. Col. Livingston must make an exact Return of their Ranks and Time of Appointment, &c.

I am Dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

G. WASHINGTON.

Again, in another Letter General Washington addressed General Parsons (then at New York), as follows:

HEAD QUARTERS, Valley Forge, }
7 March, 1778. }

"Dear Sir: In a Letter from General Putnam of the 13th ult^o he informed me, that there were two large Scows and several Gunboats upon Hand, and that the Timber for two floating Batteries was cut, but the Work not begun; I must beg your Attention to the completing of these several Kinds of Craft and to the repairing of any others that may want it. We shall have occasion for the common Boats to transport Men, Baggage and Stores with Expedition, when we are drawing our Reinforcements from the Eastward, and for the armed Boats and Batteries to keep open the Communication, should any of the Enemy's Vessels attempt to interrupt it. Gen. Putnam wrote me at the same Time that some Boats were building at Albany, but did not know in what Forwardness they were. Be pleased to inform yourself and urge the Necessity of having them finished."

To the two preceding Letters General Parsons replied as follows :

“CAMP WEST POINT, March 16, 1778.

“Dear General: On the 14th inst. I had the Honor of receiving your Letter of the 7th of March, and also one of the 8th containing a Copy of the 5th of March. I shall pay particular Attention to forwarding the Work of the Boats designed for transporting over, as well as those which are to be employed for Defense on Hudson River. I have ordered all the Boats and other Crafts on the River to be collected in different Places and put to the best possible State immediately. I have not got a Return, when that is made I shall be able to give your Excellency a particular Account of them. When I was last at Poughkeepsie the Gun Boats were in such a State as to give Hopes of their being fit for Use within a few Weeks, and as Gov. Clinton has been kind enough to take upon himself the Direction of them, I think we may hope to see them completed soon. I will send to Albany and know the State of the Boats there, and as the River will soon be clear of Ice, I will order down such Boats and other Crafts as can be had there, fit for Transportation over the River. *If the Chain is completed we shall be ready to stretch it over the River next Week.* A sufficient Number of Chevaux de frise to fill those Parts left open last Year, are ready to sink as soon as the Weather and the State of the River will admit it to be done. I hope to have *two Sides and one Bastion of the Fort* in some State of Defence in about a Fortnight, the other Sides need very little to secure them. There is a Prospect of having five or six Cannon mounted in one of our Batteries this Week. I think the Works are going on as fast as could be expected from our small Number of Men, total Want of Materials provided, and of Money to purchase them. We have borrowed, and begged, and hired Money to this Time. I have several times advanced my last Shilling towards purchasing Materials, &c., and I believe this has been the Case with almost every Officer here. As we still live, I hope we shall accomplish the Works in the River in Season, if the Enemy move with their accustomed Caution and Tardiness; when I hope Congress will repay what has been advanced, and cannot think us blamable if we have been compelled to subject the Country to some extra Expence to save the Public Credit and forward the Business intrusted to our Care. By a Letter from General Putnam, I shall expect his Return to this Post by the End of this Week. He has purchased three 18 Pounders mounted on travelling Carriages, which are on the Road from Boston. The Contents of your Excellency's Letter of the 8th shall be particularly attended to, if no other Difficulties appear than at present offer themselves to View, perhaps an Attempt may be made within eight Days, much sooner it cannot be for Reasons I will hereafter give. The Letter

of the 5th refer'd to in that of the 8th, not having come to Hand, gives me some Concern, as that falling into the Enemy's Hands may wholly defeat us; I shall be unwilling to make the Attempt unless it should arrive safe. The Horse mentioned by your Excellency cannot be had, one Horseman only being at this Post at present, but some other Mode may be substituted.

I am your Excellency's

Obedt Servt,

Saml H. Parsons

Again, in Reference to the Movements of the Enemy at New York, &c., General Parsons thus writes to General Washington, under Date,

FISHKILL, 20 March, 1778.

"Dear General: By a Variety of Accounts from New York, the Enemy design'd speedy Movement from thence; about thirty Transports are in Ballast, Cannon taken on board and Troops marched from Kings Bridge to the City last Sunday. Where their Destination is I cannot conjecture from the Information I have rec'd. I hope not up this River until our Defence is more perfect. I this Moment hear the Fleet sailed the Day before yesterday, and are said to be bound Eastward. They went toward the Hook from New York. Your Excellency's Letter of the 5th I received the 18th Instant & shall pursue your Directions.

I am your Excellency's

Obedt Servt,

SAM'L H. PARSONS.

Letter from General McDougall to General Parsons.

HEAD QUARTERS, Fishkill, 4th April, 1778.

SIR:

I received yours of 25 m. past 8 o'Clock of this Morning. Those Vessels are probably coming up to reconnoitre the State of your Works, whatever may be their Object. The completing the Works and Ob-

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structions are of so much Importance, that you must defend the Ground to the utmost of your Power, for should the Enemy destroy those Works and Barracks, the completing the Works and Obstructions cannot be accomplished this Campaign. If the Enemy should appear in tolerable Force, your Strength should be disposed in the best Position to defend West Point. I shall be obliged to risque the . . . here to the Defence of the Militia, till the Continental Troops arrive from below and Albany; you did right to order the Stores from Kings Ferry. Mr. Mudock has sent off a Number of Stores to you this Morning; if the 18 Pound Cartridges are not sent, I have ordered my Aid to him to dispatch them with the Whaleboat and 24 Rounds of Musket Cartridges for 700 Men. A Mortar will be of little use to you against a Ship; as her Movement, even when she is at anchor, is so various with Wind and Tide. The Howitzer which you have will be of more use to you. A good Lookout as far down the River as your Boats can go with Safety; and the inclosing the Work should be steadily pursued. If their three Vessels should come near, your Scouts should be sent out on both Sides of the River, where it is probable they may land a small Party to reconnoitre the State of your Works. These are the general Objects I wish you to attend to. I have this Morning wrote for Colonel Nixon's Regiment, and suggested to Governor Clinton the Necessity of having the Militia in a State of Readiness. If the Enemy visit you soon, I shall do every thing in my Power for your Relief; you have now all the Force I can give you; unless I call the Militia out. And if this is done, upon the appearance of three Vessels, they will not turn out so readily, when they may be wanted for serious Service. Captain Sloo with his Men, and Boats are so exposed to be cut off, by a small Party from those Vessels, or any other, that I wish you to order him to send up all the Boats and Scows except two, and their Crews to Fishkill Landing, and in Case he finds himself in Danger to remove there to Fly,¹ as I have no Guard to give him. The Returns of the Corps at West Point, will be made every Friday, and the Command particularly designated at the Return. If you can send to him by Water, cause the inclosed to be delivered to Major Tearse.

I am in Haste,

Your Humble Servant,

ALEX. McDUGALL.

General Parsons.

¹ *Query*, to remove thence to the Fly, (or *Vlaie*.)

Letter from General Parsons to Col. Jeremiah Wadsworth.

CAMP AT WEST POINT, Feb. 22, 1778.

DEAR SIR :

Your Favor of the 9th inst. I rec'd by Col. Hughes, and thank you for the Care you have taken of me. You ask me where I can be found? This is a puzzling Question; the Camp is at a Place on Hudson's River call'd West Point, opposite where Fort Constitution once stood. The situation is pass'd Description, surrounded with almost inaccessible Mountains, and craggy Rocks which overtop the highest Hills, at present covered with Piles of Snow, the River in our Front affords a beautiful Prospect on our Right and Left to New Windsor on one Hand and to Fort Montgomery on y^e other with some little Islands interspers'd. The surrounding Prospect affords as great Variety of Hills, Mountains, Rocks, which seem to shut up every Avenue to us, and of Swamps, Meadows, deep Vallies which obstruct the Passage of the Traveller and of small beautiful Plains in a good Degree of Cultivation intermixed, as almost any Place I have seen; to a contemplative Mind which delights in a lonely Retreat from the World to view and admire the stupendous and magnificent Works of Nature, 'tis as beautiful as Sharon, but affords to a Man who loves the Society of the World a prospect nearly allied to the Shades of Death; here I am to be found at present in what Situation of Mind you will easily imagine. Mr. Dwight and Major Humphrey are now here, and a good Companion now and then adds to the Number of my agreeable Family.

News arrives here by Accident only. The account of Burgoinc's Defeat reach'd the Ears of Administration via Carleton about the 5th of Dec. (I dare say 'twas sent by him with Expedition and good Relish). The Nation was put into a great Consternation, but after three or four Days recovered their surprize and voted 20,000 additional Troops about the 8th of Dec'r.

I am heartily glad Col. Delancy has returned, the more so, as the Gentry of this State were flush'd with Hopes he would violate his Honour and act the base Part they wish'd, tho at present he cannot be exchang'd, nothing on my Part shall be omitted to render the State of a Prisoner as easy to him as a Man of Honor has Reason to expect; my Compliments await him, with my Wishes that his *personal* Enemies may never have greater cause to Triumph over him than his present Conduct has afforded. Col. Webb, I hear, will not be exchang'd at present, perhaps 'tis Right. I earnestly wish to know what we are about in Connecticut, what prospects of filling and supporting our Army, &c. * * *

General Parsons to Governor Trumbull.

[Trumbull's Papers, vol. VIII, p. 92. Mss. Hist. Soc'y.]

FISHKILL, 27th Feb., 1778.

SIR :

The Distress of the Southern Army is doubtless made known to your Excellency. No mode of Relief will be left untried to relieve them, the Provisions on the Border of your State and of New York cannot be remov'd without the Aid of Teams, and the Army must perish without them; and the Teams cannot be furnish'd in this State, 'tis too late to Speculate about the Matter; without the immediate coercive Power of your Government, in my Opinion, the Army is ruin'd; I must therefore earnestly entreat your Excellency to issue Orders to impress necessary Teams for the purpose of removing Provisions, &c., to the North River, and that the Order made may be transmitted to this Post without Delay, that I may be enabled to know what Measures to take in pursuance thereof.

General Washington to General Parsons, at West Point.

[P—vol. I, No. 32, p. 64.]

VALLEY FORGE, March 8th, 1778.

DEAR SIR :

Below you will receive a Copy of my last, dated the 5th, to which I will add a Thought which has occurred since the writing of it; and which, if the Scheme is practicable at all, may add not a little to the Success; namely, to let the Officers and Soldiers employed in the Enterprize be dressed in red, and much in the Taste of the British Soldiery. Webb's Regiment will afford these Dresses; and it might not be amiss to know certainly, the Number of some Regiment that is quartered in the City. Under some Circumstances this Knowledge may avail them, especially of the Number on their own Buttons should correspond thereto.

P. S. The Official Papers would be a vast Acquisition, and might without much Difficulty, accompany the Person.

Copy of the Letter referred to.

March 5th, 1778.

DEAR SIR :

I learn from undoubted Authority, that General Clinton quarters in Captain Kennedy's House, in the City of New York, which you know is near Fort George, and by the late Fire stands in a Manner alone. What Guards may be at, or near, his Quarters, I cannot with Precision say; and, therefore, shall not add any thing on this Score, lest it should prove a Mis-information: But I think it one of the most practicable (and surely it will be amongst the most desirable and honourable) Things imaginable, to take him Prisoner.

This House laying close on the Water, and a retired Way through a back Yard or Garden leading into it, what, if you have Whale Boats (8 or 10) but want of Secrecy, can prevent the Execution in the Hands of an enterprising Party. The Embarkation might even be (and this I should think best) at King's Ferry, on the first of the Ebb, and early in the Evening. Six or eight Hours, with change of Hands, would row the Boats under the West Shore, and very secretly to the City, and the flood Tide will hoist them back again; or a Party of Horse might meet them at Fort Lee.

I had like not to have mentioned that no Ship of War is in the North River (was not at least) ten Days ago, nor within 400 Yards of the Point; all being in the East River. I shall add no more. This is dropped as a Hint, to be improved upon, or rejected, as Circumstances point out and justify.

[From the Connecticut Gazette, No. 750, March 27, 1778.]

CAMP WEST POINT, March 8, 1778.

All the Officers not on the recruiting Service, and Soldiers belonging to the several Regiments in the Brigade under my Command, who have been absent on Furloughs which are now expired, are to join their respective Regiments without Loss of Time. This Order is to be considered as the most peremptory, and no Excuse but Inability will be admitted for want of Compliance.

And whereas there are many Deserters from General Howe's Army and from the Troops lately commanded by General Burgoyne, some Prisoners of War, who have been suffered to remain at large, and divers

suspicious or disaffected Persons strolling about the Country, who are daily offering themselves for Enlistments.

The several commissioned and non-commissioned Officers now on the recruiting Service, are directed and ordered in the most positive Terms not to enlist any Persons of the above Description or give Certificates concerning such Persons if hired for the Purpose of exempting any Inhabitants of these States from military Duty.

And the Gentlemen employed by the Legislatures of the States, for promoting the recruiting Service are desired to take Notice of the above Prohibition, and regulate their Conduct accordingly.

SAMUEL H. PARSONS, Brig^d General.

Gen. Parsons to Capt. Thomas Machin, at New Windsor.

WEST POINT, 11th March, 1778.

SIR :

As Col. Labradier has left us, I wish you, if you can be absent from New Windsor for a Day, to come to this Post tomorrow or the Day after, to advise about the proper Method of fortifying this Place.

General Washington to General Parsons, at West Point.

[B—vol. v, No. 172, p. 153.]

HEAD QUARTERS, 18th March, 1778.

DEAR SIR :

I am favoured with yours of the 7th, enclosing a Letter from the Rev^d Mr. Dwight, to whom I have written upon the Matter proposed by him.

I am sorry to hear, that any seeming Inconsistency in my Letters should, among other Things, have retarded the Execution of the Works, but if you will revert to my Letters of the 2d and 27th of December, you will find that my Orders were express, to keep the Troops, meaning the main Body of them, steadily to work. I mentioned a Liberty of sending out light Parties towards the Plains, because they were necessary, not only to curb small foraging Parties of the Enemy, but for the Security of the Camp.

To reconcile all Matters, and to obviate the Jealousies and Prejudices that, whether well or ill-founded, had taken Place, I have ordered General McDougall to take the Command at the Highlands, and vested him

with full Powers to superintend the whole, at least, until Congress have determined whether the Command of the Forts and the Superintendency of the Works shall be distinct and independent of that Department.

General Washington to Maj. Gen. McDougall, at Fishkill.

[Washington's Writings, B—vol. v, p. 200, No. 220.]

[Extract.]

VALLEY FORGE, March 31st, 1778.

By Report, Rhode Island was to be evacuated (as on the 20th inst.) and the Opinion brought to Philadelphia. This, if true, evidently proves that Gen. Howe intends an early Campaign, to take Advantage of our weak State. What is to be done? We must either oppose our whole Force to his, in this Quarter, or take the Advantage of him in some other, *which leads me to ask your Opinion of the Practicability of an Attempt upon New York with Parson's Brigade, Nixon's, and the Regiments of Van Schaick, Hazen and James Livingston's, aided by the Militia from the States of New York and Connecticut*, such I mean as can speedily be drawn together. *On this Subject and the advisability of such an Enterprise*, I would have you consult *Gov. Clinton and Gen. Parsons, and them only.*

General Alexander McDougall to General Washington.

[Washington's Papers, vol. xxii, p. 182.]

[Extract.]

FISHKILL, 13th April, 1778.

SIR :

I am honored with the Receipt of your Favor of the 31st ult^o and 6th inst. The Inclosures in the last have been forwarded agreeable to your Orders.

No Service would be more agreeable to me than an Attack upon New York could recommend it consistent with any probable Prospect of Success. But the Condition and Strength of these Posts utterly forbid it; especially when the Consequence of a Misfortune in the Attempt is duly considered, as it may affect the Supplies to your Army and the general Influence of the Campaign.

When I have more Leisure I shall enumerate the Reasons on which I give *this Opinion*.

For the present I beg leave to refer your Excellency to *that of Gov-*

*ernor Clinton and General Parsons,*¹ &c. Mr. Kosciuszko is esteemed by those who have attended the Works at West Point, to have more Practice than Col. Delaradiere, and his Manner of treating the People more acceptable than that of the latter; which induced *General Parsons* and Governor Clinton to desire the former may be continued at West Point. The first has a Commission as Engineer with the Rank of Colonel in October, 1776; Col. Delaradiere's Commission I think is dated in November last.

General Parsons to General McDougall, on State of Provisions in his Department.

[General Gates's Papers, vol. XII, in N. Y. Hist. Society.]

LYME, 27 April, 1778.

DEAR GENERAL :

I have carefully examined the State of Provisions in the Commissary Department, and believe the Meat in this State already purchased will supply the Army to about the 10th June, from which there will be some Distress in the Army for that Article for some short Time, perhaps to the Middle of July, unless supplied from other States, southward and westward of this. Governor Trumbull is very desirous to pursue the proposed Attack on New York, and will do what any Man can do to forward the Design. He desires the Troops may not be called for until our Preparations are made, that they may be detained as little Time as possible; but in the Interim he would wish to be informed early whether the Design is pursued or laid aside. The important Advice from France and

¹ Vol. 23, p. 22 "That the Regiment proposed be sent forward, that Preparations be immediately made, with as much Dispatch as possible to execute the Whole or such Part of the proposed Plan, as Circumstances will admit of; that Application be made to Gov. Trumbull, to know what Number of the new made Regiments can be had, and at what Time; that the Commissary-General be also applied to, for an Account of Provisions, &c. That the Enterprize does not promise Success by Coup de main, under present Circumstances; but there may be great Probability of its succeeding in the whole or in part, within a Month, or five Weeks, if Men and Provisions can be made. The present State of the Posts, for the Defence of the North River, does not admit withdrawing the Troops for the proposed Expedition immediately, but in a few Weeks the Works may be in some State of Defence, so as to be tenable with fewer Men, than at present and the Consequences less fatal to the Country in Case of the Expedition's failing in the Execution.

SAM'L H. PARSONS,
GEO. CLINTON.

the evident Distress of Britain, in my Opinion, affords us the best Opportunity of attacking the Enemy with the fairest Prospects of Success; long Delays I fear will be detrimental, especially when the insidious Arts of the British Court have begun to be practiced & may have too baneful an Influence if they are suffered to continue long in their present State. I wish to hear from your Honor by the Return of Post; that if my continuance in this State, any longer, can be of any public Utility, I may receive your Orders; otherwise I believe I shall be able to return in about a Fortnight. If we make the proposed Attack, I am of Opinion I shall be of more Service by staying here till the Order is made & the Levies nearly completed which are expected from this State, than I can be at your Post.

General Parsons to General Horatio Gates.

[Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.]

WEST POINT, 31 May, 1778.

DEAR GENERAL:

Major Humphrey has just returned, and reports that the 52d Reg't commanded by Col. French, marched from New York the 23d inst., and encamped near Kings Bridge in a Line with the 45th. The 71st Reg't have arrived at the Bridge from Long Island; the Regiments of the Hereditary Prince, Prince Charles, of Trumbach, of Stein, are all the Foreign Troops he could learn remained on York Island; two of which are in the Bowery near the City, and two near Kings Bridge; the 38th British Reg't is in the City; most, if not all, the new Levies are marched from the Bridge to the City, about 8 Days since, Part of them embarked on Board Ships at Horn's Hook; the Public Report is they are going to Long Island to replace the Troops which have been called from thence to the Bridge. 'Tis publickly reported that a French War actually exists at this Time; the Press was very hot in New York; the Accounts of the Numbers obtained in this way are various from 250 to 1000, however they all agree they are for the Sea Service and are put on Ship board. A considerable number of Shipping were in the East River a few Days since, and the Evening of the 29th a Fleet from New York came to anchor in the Sound near Hart Island opposite East Chester and New Rochelle, supposed to be about 20 or 30 Ships; a Press is expected every Day upon Long Island; the Refugees are concealing themselves to avoid it.

All Communication with the City has been prohibited for some

Time, evidently to cover their Movements, this being effected, the Inhabitants are again permitted to pass over the Bridge with Provisions, &c. On the whole 'tis pretty evident instead of collecting a Force at the Bridge, their Strength is lessened, and the new Levies have doubtless business in some other Quarter; a Paper of the 25th of May, from New York, I have sent you. When I have the honor to wait on you I shall be able to give some more particular Accounts.

I understand you design to visit the Troops at Peekskill to-Day, and I shall therefore call upon you in the Morning.

General Parsons to General Gates.

[Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.]

WEST POINT, 4th June, 1778.

DEAR GENERAL:

The Artillerists at the Point are by no means sufficient in Number to manage the Artillery here. Col. Stevens' three Companies may be very usefully employed at this Post. Their Numbers will enable us to put the Artillery in a proper State. If no special purpose is to be answered by removing them to this Village, I shall be much obliged by Colonel Stevens and his Men remaining at this Post for the present. If any Companies of the Train are wanted at the Village more than are now there a Company of Col. Lamb's Regiment, perhaps on many accounts, had better be sent; that Regiment has been in contention from their raising, and I am certain Captain Moody and Colonel Stevens will never agree in the same Camp. As soon as the weather will permit 'twill be necessary for them to encamp; if your Honor shall be of opinion the Service will be as well advanced by their continuing here as removing, I should be happy in his receiving your Order to take his Post at this Place.

Will it be necessary to publish in General Orders that Colonel Stevens commands the Artillery? Many unhappy disputes may be prevented by it.

General Parsons to General Gates.

[Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.]

WEST POINT, 8th June, 1778.

DEAR GENERAL :

By the information of Deserters and the concurring Accounts of Inhabitants near the Bridge, there are 3 Hessian and 2 British Regiments in the City, 1 Battallion of Highlanders at Blomingtondale; at Ft. Washington and the Bridge, 2 British Regiments, viz: the 45th and 52d, two Hessian Regiments, Bruverton's and Bayard's Regiments and Emerick's Chasseurs, 1 twelve and 6 six Pounders in Fort Independence; 2 of 18, 2 of 12 and 5 of 6 and under in Fort Washington. The Cannon removed from the Embrasures in Fort Washington on the Side next the North River. Fort Independence not picketted but an Abattis around it; a Captain's Guard kept in the Fort relieved every three Days; in the Redoubts are Guards from 25 to 36 Men. By the Information of returning Refugees, it appears the Enemy are establishing a Camp at the Head of the Fly on Long Island. Cruger's, Ludlow's, Fanning's and a Reg't of Brown's Brigade, are to encamp there, perhaps 1000 Men. A Reg't of Regular Tories at Brookline, I suppose the 35th, this Reg't rec'd orders last Tuesday to march Eastward on the Island, and their heavy Baggage to be put on Ship Board, by the Information of Jos. Lawrence and Samuel Riker, from New York, two British Regiments received Orders to embark the 6th inst., but where destined is uncertain. No particular information of Robinson's Regiment. I think it probable they still remain at Harlem. The Ships are thirty man'd and cannot remove without increasing the Number of Hands. Those at Huntington are ordered to be ready to sail some Time next Week. The Enemy are strengthening their Works on Bayard's Hill, but in what Manner I am unable to learn; On the whole Matter it appears evident to me, the Enemy are not preparing to make any capital Attack on the Country, but are securing themselves from any Attempt we may make in the City.

The Camp at the Fly on Long Island, I think well chosen to defend the City on that Part. 'Tis about eight or nine Miles from the Ferry, and from the Creek near the Camp to Jamaica Bay on the South of the Island about five miles; and the Passes through the Mountains are effectually secured by this Post which leaves it exceeding difficult to move forward to Brookline with any Artillery; and will enable the Enemy to

send occasional Parties down the Island and compel what Supplies of Provisions and Forage from Suffolk County can be spared. I believe that County can feed three thousand Men six Months.

W. Malcom to General Parsons.

WEST POINT, August 3, 1778.

DEAR GENERAL :

Here I am holding Committee among Spades and Shovels. Why was I banished? However I begin to be reconciled. I must be so; especially as you are not moving towards York; if you do don't be surprised to see me parade among you. We are driving on downwards; the more we do the more we find we have to do. Why did you not begin to move the Mountain, rather than add to its Magnitude. Send me News and Newspapers, anything to keep us alive, this is actually t'other End of the World. My Compliments to his Grace and my other good Friends and Acquaintances in your Family. I often think with pleasure on the Happiness of the few past Weeks we were together, but it adds to my Vexation too.

General Parsons's Opinion in Answer to Queries of his Excellency Gen'l Washington in his Letters of the 14th and 15th October, 1778.

CAMP, October 17th, 1778.

SIR :

The march of Part of the Troops towards Boston being determined, it only remains for me to give my Opinion in what Manner the Army shall be disposed during the Winter, and how they are to be provided with Forage and Provisions.

The Security, good Government, and Discipline of the Troops will be best attained and promoted in a compact Body, and Bread will be easier supplied in a Station near the North River than in any other Position, and no other Position will so effectually secure our important Posts near that River. Forage will be provided with greater Ease and at less Expence in a dispersed than a compact Situation. I imagine the greater Part of the Meat consumed in the Winter will be salted, the Grads fed Beef will soon be expended, and the Stall fed Beef will not be furnished in great Quantities until near the Close of the Winter; if this should be

the case, the Expence of Carriage will be less in a dispersed than a united Situation.

On the whole, I am of Opinion, that about 6 or 7000 Men should be kept in a collected Body at or near Fishkill, which with the Assistance of the Militia, will be able to Defend those Passes against any Force the Enemy can bring against them before the whole Army might be again united; that about 1000 be posted in the Garrison at West Point, about 3000 at or near the Clove on the west Side Hudson's River, and the Remainder (about 2000) not far from Danbury or Ridgefield, or in that proportion, should the Army be more or less numerous after the first of January, by which Time the term of Service of many in the Army expires. These Posts will be so far removed from the Enemy as to secure against any sudden Attack of the Enemy, and will enable them with Safety to send off most of their Horses and Cattle. The Guards for preserving the Passage by King's Ferry to the Southern from the Eastern States may be furnished from Fishkill; and the intermediate Guards necessary from Danbury and the Clove.

The Post at Danbury may furnish Guards on the Sea Coast, to prevent Incurfions of small Parties of the Enemy to desolate their Towns or pillage their Property, and although no Protection can be afforded the Towns on the Sea Coasts sufficient to prevent their Destruction by a large Detachment of the Enemy; yet a Protection from the Incurfions of small Parties, will be a great relief to the Inhabitants; and a Body of Troops stationed near the Coasts may probably prevent the Enemy from making those Attempts which otherwise would be made.

But a Reason which has great Weight in my Mind, is the great Dissatisfaction which will be given the Country, if this Measure is not pursued. I cannot omit again expressing to your Excellency my Fears that the present Temper of the Country, the discontent and increasing Uneasiness of the Army, the depreciated State of our Currency, and other Causes not necessary to enumerate, afford the Enemy a fair Opportunity yet to plunge us into inextricable Ruin and Destruction. If these Fears are justly grounded, great Attention ought to be paid to the Inclinations and Wishes of the Inhabitants of the States, as one Mode of preventing those Consequences which may follow from the present State of the Country.

This disposition is sufficiently numerous in every Part to keep up regular Discipline, and in case of an Attack may soon be supported; and will serve as a Nucleus to which the Militia will gather, and with whom they will be able to make an effectual Opposition to any Detachment the Enemy can send.

General Washington to General Putnam.

HEAD QUARTERS, MIDDLEBROOK, April 28, '79.

DEAR SIR :

By Intelligence received from different Quarters, there is great Reason to suspect the Enemy have some important Movement in Contemplation. In this Aspect of things it becomes the part of Prudence to provide as effectually as we can for the Security of those Points, at which we are most vulnerable. I am therefore to desire, you will without delay detach *General Parsons's Brigade* to reinforce General McDougall, and to continue with him 'till further Orders. They must take their Artillery and Baggage with them.

General Washington to General Putnam.

MIDDLEBROOK, May 24, 1779.

DEAR SIR :

By recent Intelligence through different Channels I have the best reason to believe, that General Clinton has drawn his whole Force to a Point at New York and its Vicinity. That he has collected, and some accounts add, removed to Kingsbridge, a number of flat bottomed Boats with muffled Oars, and that every Appearance indicates an Expedition at Hand. There are but two important Objects he can have in View, to-wit : This Army and the Posts in the Highlands. Should either be attempted therefore, or a Movement made, which has a tendency to either, you will cause *General Parsons's Brigade*, to march without a moment's loss of Time for the Highlands, and put them under the Orders of Major General McDougall. Every Preparation is to be made in the Mean while for this Event, that no Delay may happen, after a Call from General McDougall, or your Knowledge of the Matter, previously obtained through any other Channel. The Brigade may move by the way of Mahopack Pond, to be equally in the Way to Peekskill or Fishkill, subject nevertheless, to any other Route, which Circumstances may induce Gen'l McDougall to give. Baggage is to be no impediment to the March, for as the Occasion, more than probably, will be urgent, the March and Junction with the Troops on the North River must be rapid.

Brig. Gen. Parsons's Opinion of the proper Disposition of the Army.

WEST POINT, 12th June, 1779.

DEAR GENERAL :

General Paterfon joined his Brigade last Evening, and is now on the Point; when the Public Service will admit, I shall be happy to join my Brigade at such place as will most conduce to the general Welfare.

Your Excellency was pleased to desire my Opinion of the disposition to be made of the Army.

Under all circumstances, I think 3000 Men should be assigned for garrisoning this Post, by which I understand the Forts on the Point and Highlands near the Heights near Rock Hill, and the Island where Fort Constitution was.

On the East Side the River, a Force should be kept in the Highlands sufficient to prevent the Enemy's occupying the Hills there which may cover Works, which will exceedingly distress this Post. The advance of those Troops may safely be at or near the Village; this I think necessary, because those Grounds cannot be held by this Garrison, without new Works are constructed and the Garrison increased. The remainder of the Army will be well posted in or near Smith's Clove, with a Detachment advanced between Fort Montgomery and the Furnace.

As this Post, or the Army, are the only capital Objects the Enemy can propose, I do not know a better Disposition which can be made at present to defeat their Designs, than what may be formed on the Ideas before expressed.

I have nothing new this Day, neither my Scouts nor my Boats are yet returned. I should be obliged to your Excellency to be informed what Congress have Resolved respecting an Aid-de-Camp for a Brigadier, that I may recommend one if allowed.

Major General Heath to Brigadier Gen. Parsons,

HEAD QUARTERS,
DANFORTH'S HOUSE, June 25, 1779. }

DEAR SIR :

I have this moment received a Letter from his Excellency General Washington, in which is a Paragraph in the following Words: "I think it will be advisable to detach a couple hundred Men towards

“Robinson’s Stores at Mahopach Pond, to march light and with Caution endeavoring to magnify their Numbers to the Inhabitants. This may serve to check the Enemy and help to discover their Design.”

In Consequence whereof you will please to detach as soon as may be, one Field Officer, and one hundred Light Infantry properly officered; this Detachment from your Brigade will be joined by one hundred from General Huntington’s Brigade. As I do not fully know the best Route I request you would direct one and point out to General Huntington the Place where the Infantry of the two Brigades shall form a Junction, and at what Hour. My dear Sir, let no Time be lost. If possible let the Men have a little Rum with them and such Provisions as may be necessary.

Brig. Gen. Parsons’s Opinion in Answer to Queries of his Excellency Gen’l Washington in Proceedings of Council of General Officers of 26th July, 1779.

CAMP NEAR ROBINSON’S, 27th July, 1779.

DEAR GENERAL :

The supposed Strength of the Enemy, and our own Numbers and Preparations, as stated by your Excellency to the Council, will in my Opinion oblige us to adopt a defensive System, until our Army is considerably increased in Numbers and other Preparations for offensive Operations. The Posts in the Highlands are of so much Importance as ought to induce us to defend them at every Hazard; for that purpose I suppose three thousand Men necessary to be left at the Point and Posts dependant, if the Army moves to any great Distance. Forage for the Cattle and Horses will necessarily oblige us to remove very soon.

I believe, if the Right of the Army should take a Position at Peekskill, and extend the Left nearly to the Post now occupied by Gen’l Glover, and wait Events, it will in no Measure oppose a System of Defence; they will be perfectly safe from Attack, will be easily furnished with necessary Supplies, and be in a better Situation to carry on a partisan War, than in their present Position; and can be ready in Season to relieve the Fort in case of an Attack; and to oppose with Prospects of Success any Attempts which may be made to destroy the Towns on the Coast or Frontier of Connecticut. If we can procure a Sufficiency of Military Stores for the Purpose, I am of Opinion an Attempt to dispossess the Enemy of Verplanks and Stony Points ought to be attempted; this, if successful, would disgrace the British Arms, animate our Soldiery to

greater Exertions, and enable us to move with Safety to a greater Distance from West Point, and thereby cover a larger Extent of Country from the Enemy's Depredations ; besides, they will be removed to so great a distance from the Point, as to put it out of their Power to make any sudden Attack upon the Fort ; if this Enterprize should be undertaken, both Sides of the River should be attempted at the same Time, because the Post on the East Side cannot be carried whilst the Enemy remain possessed of Stony Point. In this Position of the Army the Enemy can advance no Part of their Force to any considerable Distance from their Main Army without danger of Surprise, and we shall be able to harass them constantly, and perhaps compel them to retire still further.

I cannot but lament our Inability to Attack their Army and dispossess them of New York ; it appears to me of great Importance to be effected this Campaign ; at the Close of it a great Proportion of our Army will be disbanded, and the present State of the Country affords little Prospects of Recruiting.





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